

**THE STATUS OF THEISTIC PROPOSITIONS
IN WILLIAM OF OCKHAM: A STUDY
IN THE LOGIC OF THEISM**

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ABSTRACT

This study is concerned with two systematically related problems, namely an interpretation and evaluation of Ockham's logical and semantic theories with respect to theistic statements and the question whether theistic statements may be said to possess an assertive character. The latter question has been derived from a consideration of recent discussions of the problem, particularly those discussions arising out of logical empiricism. The problem has then been referred back to the context of 14th century scholasticism and restated in the terms of the classical logician and theologian, William of Ockham. It is then suggested that Ockham was quite sensitive to the possible difficulties which formalistic empiricism and rigorously developed semantic theories can present for theistic statements. In order to illustrate this point some of the essential theses of Ockham's scepticismology and metaphysics, along with the logical and semantic theories, have been presented under the title of the "Negative Theses". It is then argued that these negative and sceptical theses are to be balanced by a number of "positive theses" concerning the meaning and significance of theistic terms. The analysis of the predicates traditionally ascribed to God has been described in terms of what has been called the 'composite concept of "God"' and this description is then shown to have a number of important logical and semantic properties. The predicates fall into two classes, namely the positive and negative predicates, and I have argued that these are to be best understood in terms of the notions of "class" and "complement-class". It is then shown that while Ockham can claim a reference for the positive predicates, difficulties arise with respect to the meanings of these terms. When concepts having their origin in the natural order are used in application to God, such concepts cannot have their ordinary meaning and significance. The logic of the concepts may mean that ordinary and natural concepts are, in a sense, set aside for religious discourse, but such discourse must then be said to have a secondary sense, and under analysis this secondary sense would appear to be entirely empty of any descriptive content. The result of this is that any assertions using such traditional predicates are vacuous.

Ockham does not appear to have an explicit answer for these difficulties. It is argued, however, that with a number of revisions and extensions of his theories along with a revised analysis of his distinction between the viator and the beatus these difficulties can be avoided. The logical properties of the 'composite concept of "God"' remove the possibility of a reduction of theistic language to literalism, and the distinction between the viator and the beatus allows the believer to claim that his language is, so to speak, a set of translation statements. It is then argued that if a distinction is made between different types of reference and different types of assertions and the concept of 'God' is re-described as a theoretical term naming a theoretical entity, it is then quite legitimate to claim an assertive function for some theistic statements.

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ABBREVIATIONS

IS - Ordinatio.

IIS, IIIS, IVS - Reportatio

SL - Summa Logica

Q - Quodlibeta Septem

PREFACE

The view that theistic statements cannot be properly said to have an assertive character has become a thesis accepted by many philosophers and philosophers of religion. Although the factors which have led to this view are complex, it is not too great an oversimplification to say that the thesis is a result of the impact of logical empiricism and philosophical analysis upon explanations of the meaning of theistic statements. When adopted as a principle shaping the structure of constructive theological investigations, the thesis has far-reaching consequences, not the least of which is the demand that all assumptions of theological realism must be abandoned. As a result it is very difficult, if not impossible, to justify the truth and reference claims which are, prima facie, intrinsic to theistic belief. It, by no means follows that all constructive theological efforts must be given up, but it will follow that the scope of the enterprise must be sharply curtailed and the nature of the theological task understood in a considerably different light. Various "reductive" interpretations of theism may still remain conceptual possibilities in terms of which the significance of

theistic statements, for example, might be interpreted as support for moral and ethical beliefs. But if the logical, semantic, and empiricistic theses of logical empiricism are taken as normative and definitive for philosophical method, the alternative would appear to be the dismissal of all theistic and theological language.

It seems to be little recognized that the empiricistic and semantic theses fundamental to logical empiricism -- and in terms of which the denial of any assertive function for theistic statements has been argued -- are by no means unique to the twentieth century. Many of the current logical and semantic dogmas have striking analogues in the conceptual developments of later scholasticism. This is particularly the case for the fundamental logical and semantic theses of William of Ockham. But one of the interesting features of Ockham's works is that, while operating within the context of a rigorous semantics and empiricism, constructive theological endeavour still remains a conceptual possibility. Because of this feature, an examination of the philosophical and theological methods of Ockham has considerable relevance to the contemporary situation and a detailed examination is in order. The following study attempts to describe the Ockhamist logical, semantic, and empiricistic problematic with specific reference to the application of these principles to theistic statements. The procedure adopted has been that of, first, stating a

problem which has arisen in the contemporary setting, namely whether it can be claimed that theistic statements have an assertive character or not. Then, secondly, after providing an outline of the basic principles of Ockhamism, an exposition of the logical structure of theistic statements, within the context of this logico-empiricism, has been provided. It is then argued that it is possible to justifiably claim an assertive character for some theistic statements within the context of the logical and semantic theories and in terms of the dualistic world-view.

In this study I have made a number of assumptions, some of which have been argued in the following, about the tenor and historical character of Ockhamism. In so doing I have found it necessary to depart, on a number of important points, from the more or less traditional interpretation and evaluation of Ockhamism. Because these interpretative points are of considerable importance for argument developed throughout the subsequent chapters it is essential that these proposed alternative evaluations and interpretations be stated first.

There is what might be called a traditional evaluation of Ockham and the Ockhamist movement. According to this evaluation, a view accepted by a number of medieval scholars, Ockham and his followers were instrumental in introducing philosophical methods and logical techniques which produced a stifling scepticism, and of all the thinkers subsequent to

the thirteenth century Ockham was by far the most desctructive critic contributing to the dissolution of the Thomistic synthesis of the previous century. Indeed, according to this evaluation, the philosophical principles are so sceptical in their implications that the entire philosophical-metaphysical enterprise became a conceptual impossibility. An unwarranted and flagrant use of the well-known razor excised so many entities from the philosophical and conceptual melieu that nothing remained but an academic quibbling over terms and interminable logic-chopping debates. If there is any historical significance for Ockham it cannot be found in the austere philosophical and metaphysical principles, but in terms of the few logical points which he developed and in the revision of the semantic and logical theories which he adopted from his predecessors.

If this view were the correct and accurate evaluation of Ockham, it is very difficult, as a minimal objection, to account for the impact of his works and the formation of what may be called the Ockhamist school. But in fact, as frequently happens, this traditional evaluation is an exaggeration and on a number of crucial points misrepresents Ockham. Recent work by a number of scholars and commentators, particularly E.A. Moody and the late Fr. Philotheus Boehner has shed new light upon the relation between Ockham and his predecessors, as well as providing the basis for a sounder

evaluation of Ockham's philosophical significance. Owing to this critical scholarship it is necessary to reconsider the place of Ockham in the late medieval context. If, for example, it is correct to speak of the fourteenth century as a period of dissolution at all -- a point which is now debatable, at least in terms of the philosophical developments -- it might be argued that the seeds of the dissolution are to be found in the developments of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Rather, what one finds in Ockham -- and this is by no means a unique characteristic -- is a demand for the highest degree of clarity and precision in the formulation and solution of conceptual problems, coupled with the logical requirement of systematic consistency. The originality of his work is to be characterized in terms of his synthesis of the previous logical and semantic developments, rather than in terms of the discovery of novel principles -- although the atomistic ontology perhaps constitutes an exception to this generalization. If, however, a high value is placed upon the criteria of clarity, consistency, scope and penetration of the understanding, and these are taken to be essential to any philosophical endeavour, then Ockham's efforts may be said to constitute an advance over those of many of his predecessors.

Throughout the present study I have not attempted to directly attack that which I have called the traditional eval-

uation. Nor has there been an effort to determine Ockham's position in the historical perspective or developments. In particular, there has been no attempt to determine the origin of the basic logical and semantic theses, although there is no question that historical antecedents for these principles can be found in the works of a number of Ockham's predecessors. There has been no attempt, furthermore, to evaluate his Aristotelianism, admittedly an important feature. My concern has been rather with the basic theses and an interpretation and evaluation of these in their application to theological statements.

With respect to the general perspective adopted towards Ockham's logical and semantic theories, I have tended to interpret these as more or less close analogues to the basic notions of the propositional and functional calculus. The theory of meaning, by the same token, has been interpreted as having a number of similarities with a Fregean type of analysis. With respect to the ontology and metaphysics, this has been interpreted as having a close analogue in the developments of logical atomism, particularly of the Tractatus variety. Consequently, Ockham is understood to be a nominalist in at least some of the contemporary senses of this term. He is not a nominalist in the sense in which this term is applied to the scholastic philosophers, namely the sense established by Roscelin of Compiègne. But Ockham is a nomin-

alist in the metaphysical sense in which the world is a world of individuals, such that if anything is to be admitted as an entity it must be construed as an individual. This metaphysical nominalism excludes very little since in addition to properties and concepts, particulars and individuals, various abstract entities, mental acts, habits, souls, spirits, angels, God, etc., can be readily admitted if there is some need to do so. The extra-mental entities (singulares) have the characteristics of an undefined primitive; the significance of the term can only be given, or determined, by the success of the schematism (with the various entities listed above) in analyzing the components of experience and the world. This general perspective is of particular importance with respect to the thesis concerning the univocity of "being" between God and the creature. I argue that this principle is best understood in purely formal terms, and that to do so removes the temptation to argue that the principle is inconsistent with other principles in Ockham or to consider the principle as incomprehensible.

Because of the character and implications of the logical and semantic theories there may be also a temptation to down-grade the importance of the theological content of Ockham's works. This becomes especially plausible if the sceptical and agnostic dimension is exaggerated and not carefully balanced with the positive theses. It might then

appear that the theological content is merely an addendum in satisfaction of academic and ecclesiastical requirements. But while there is clearly a sceptical and agnostic attitude towards the proofs for the existence of God and natural theology (in the sense that from the domain circumscribed by the natural it is possible to discover truths about the divine) Ockham is hardly unique in this respect. It does not follow, from this feature or from others, that a dichotomized Ockham is a plausible, or defensible, view. The allegation of inconsistency implicit in this view ill suits a logician, and in fact does not apply. The philosophical principles are found throughout the strictly theological works.

While there has not been an effort to trace the historical antecedents and connections in the present study, there are occasional references to antecedent thinkers, in particular, to Aquinas. The reading and interpretation of Aquinas adopted throughout has been the more or less traditional interpretation. Because of this -- a matter of convenience owing to the diversity of "Thomisms" -- the differences between Ockham and Aquinas will then appear to be considerably sharper on specific issues than is necessarily the case. Recent work on Aquinas indicates that alternative interpretations, quite different from the traditional view, are possible, and in terms of these alternatives the differences between Ockham and Aquinas

are not as great as the traditional evaluation would imply.

But while there is always the possibility of misrepresentation, sharp contrasts are sometimes more illuminating.

It must be added, finally, that the initiation of the present study owes much to the influence of Professor Robert Calhoun. Its present form is largely the result of the encouragement and invaluable suggestions of Professor George Lindbeck.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The diversity in contemporary theology makes any generalization about twentieth century theological reflection subject to careful qualification. Yet it would be difficult to deny that one important characteristic of contemporary theology is a close attention to the language of the religious community and to the meaning and significance of the basic religious and theistic terms and expressions. This is the case for those theological problems and methods which have been shaped and determined either by continental modes of reflection or by the recent developments in English philosophy. In addition to the traditional task of elaborating the conceptual structure and content of the basic propositions of the faith (or its denominational determinations), theologians are increasingly concerned not only with the doctrine of the Word, but also with the meaning of "the Word", or with the sense and significance of "religious symbols", the "grounding of theistic propositions", and the "meaning of the Gospel for a twentieth century man".

Within the context of English and American philosophy of religion and theology this change in stress is most accurately

described as a concern for the semantic properties of the basic terms and concepts within the circle of theistic discourse, such as 'God', 'salvation', 'Christian love', etc., as well as the logical or syntactic properties of such expressions as 'God acts in history' or 'God was in Christ'. Under the impact of the developments in recent philosophy it has become clear that, to say the least, these and other religious terms and expressions have a number of peculiar and unique logical properties, while the stronger claim is still often made, namely that the expressions are without any "meaning" at all. The problem of the meaning and significance of religious discourse has, therefore, become crucial to either a constructive theological system or to any responsible theological apologetics. Failure to obtain clarity with respect to the logic of the terms and expressions may lead to a confusion about the claims which can be made within the context of religious discourse, while if the assertion that theological statements are meaningless were defensible, the point of a constructive theological system becomes extremely vague and religious truth-claims are a conceptual impossibility.

It is not difficult to discover the philosophical developments which have been effective in encouraging a concern among theologians for the meaning and significance of religious statements. The early part of the present century saw the rise of logical positivism (and its transformation into logical empiricism

and philosophical analysis) as the dominant philosophical school. The implications of the general theory of meaning adopted by this group created a serious challenge for theological reflection. One of the distinctive theses of the early positivist movement was the rejection of all unverifiable propositions as meaningless nonsense, and with this rejection went much of the traditional speculative philosophy. Because the statements characteristic of these modes of thought were meaningless, they had no cognitive value and were, therefore, of little, if any, importance for dealing with the objective world. It would not be correct to say that positivism rejected all principles or statements with a general applicability; what it did was to dismiss all metaphysical or ontological statements which did not meet the verifiability requirement of meaningfulness. The attitude of positivism demanded clarity, precision, and a strict adherence to the canons of correct deductive procedure. Nor would it be correct to claim that the rejection of metaphysics was, in itself, novel or original: instances of philosophers with this sceptical bent can be cited from the classical Greek period, fourteenth century, and the early modern period -- particularly Hume and Kant. But the earlier sceptics and empiricists tend to dismiss metaphysical statements on the ground that such statements, purporting to be about transcendent entities, are not susceptible to truth or falsity. Positivism, however, provided a somewhat more penetrating reason for rejection; such statements are meaningless, without any significance, and

since the determination of truth and falsity presupposes a meaningful proposition which can have the property of being true or false, the question of the truth or falsity of such statements can never arise in the first place. The difficulties of determining the truth-functionality of some specific metaphysical statements can, therefore, be entirely circumvented.¹

The implications of this positivistic rejection of metaphysical statements were trenchantly clear for religious belief. At least some religious statements within the Christian tradition putatively refer to God, and the being to whom this reference is made is usually said to be transcendent to the natural order (as well as being immanent by way of causality or the incarnation). This property, along with others, indicate that the divine being has some of the properties usually ascribed to metaphysical entities, and therefore theistic propositions will have some of the properties of metaphysical statements. The consequences for at least some theological statements are obvious; they are tokens of meaningless language. But much of theistic discourse has been defined in creedal formulations and hence, if the positivistic critique were correct, these basic statements of the faith -- which apparently make truth-claims and purport to communicate information -- must therefore be meaningless as well. Any believer who supposes that some information has been communicated to him must be said to be living under an illusion.

¹ Cf. J.O. Urmson, Philosophical Analysis, (Oxford, 1956) p. 102ff.

The earlier theses of logical positivism now have very few supporters owing to the difficulties which soon became apparent in the verifiability theory of meaning. Schlick, perhaps the dominant figure in the Vienna circle, stated categorically that "the meaning of a proposition is the method of its verification."² This principle has the air of a slogan and it was often used as such. The point of the principle was to provide a clear and decisive method for distinguishing between literally significant and meaningless statements. But as has now become abundantly clear, a crucial problem with this criterion is that it begs the question. That which is verified is the proposition, but in order to state the conditions under which the statement would be literally significant (that is, to give its method of verification) it must first be known that the verbal expression is, in fact, a proposition, and this in turn presupposes that the statement is literally significant for the person using the statement. If it is assumed that some verbal expression expresses a proposition, this is to affirm that the sentence is a meaningful unit, for otherwise it could not be known what empirical conditions would count towards the affirmation of truth -- and this entails, so far as the verifiability requirement is concerned, that the statement is significant without any necessary reference to methods of verification.³ In order to

2 M. Schlick, "Meaning and Verification," reprinted in Readings in Philosophical Analysis, ed. by Herbert Feigl and Wilfrid Sellars, (New York, 1949), p. 146ff.

3 Cf. W.P. Alston, Philosophy of Language (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1964), Chapter 4.

avoid these difficulties, the principle of verifiability was subjected to a series of qualifications which began to weaken its effectiveness. Ayer suggested that statements be divided in such a way that a sub-class would be the factually significant propositions and only these could be counted as literally meaningful.⁴ But this distinction did not remove all the difficulties since its effectiveness depends on the possibility of isolating a class of observation-sentences which, in turn, again presupposes a reference to meaningful terms. Even with successive qualifications this basic difficulty was not circumvented, namely that in every case where there is an attempt to determine meaningfulness by the application of the verifiability requirement, determination of the relevant experience presupposes that a sentential or meaning-unit has already been grasped or understood.⁵

Transformation, however, does not entail destruction, and despite the difficulties which the verifiability requirement opens up, the principle expresses an insight which no philosophical position can ignore, namely that experience has some relevance to knowledge and belief. Some form of the verifiability

⁴ A.J. Ayer, Language, Truth and Logic, p. 12.

⁵ Schlick makes it quite clear (op. cit.) that any statement which could conceivably be verified is a meaningful statement. Hence, any statement for which there is the logical possibility of verification must be counted as meaningful and, indeed, as empirically meaningful. The difficulty with this formulation, however, is to find statements which under no circumstances could be verified.

requirement is necessary if the terms "true" and "false" are to have any importance and for determining whether a specific statement is an assertion (a question which is distinct from the question whether the sentential unit is meaningful or not).

Hence, it is necessary to preserve at least the minimum verifiability condition, that is, that some experience must be relevant to the truth or falsity of the asserted statement.

Whether, and to what extent, this requirement is strengthened by inter-subjective verification depends, at least to a considerable extent, upon current standards and practical decisions.

This basic condition will hold for any form of empiricism whether philosophical or theological. Radical empiricism, of course, tends to restrict the term "experience" to sense experience and to rule out as meaningless the possibility of verifying statements referring to inner and private states.

As the current debate on the problem of other minds and private languages has made clear, the arguments used to defend the position of radical empiricism are by no means satisfactory.

But while there is perhaps considerable disagreement as to the extent to which the minimum requirement should be strengthened, the following conditions and distinctions have become common coin: an assertion is a statement or unit of discourse used for a specific purpose, namely to "state facts", communicate information, or declare something to be the case. An assertion is not precisely identical with the meaning of the sentential terms taken together. Nor does the grammatical form of the statement necessarily give one a clue as to the function (or logical form)

of the statement. All -- or at least most -- assertions do occur in the grammatical form of the indicative, but not all indicative statements are assertions. Similarly, asserting something to be the case cannot be identified with knowing or knowledge. "S asserts that p" is not identical with "S knows that p", or with "S believes that p".

A specific sentence or linguistic unit may have a number of different uses or function in a number of different ways. Hence, a specific sentence may be used to give a warning, state a promise, give advice, make a confession, or even to state a petition, depending on the context in which the sentence is uttered. But if the context indicates that the sentence is being uttered with an assertive force, then it must be possible to show or state the experientable conditions in terms of which the statement would be true or false (whether the sentence or proposition is, in fact, true or false will be a separate and additional question). With suitable qualifications, this is approximately the same as insisting that the putative assertion has some non-linguistic context in which the statement has an information-potential. Specification of this non-linguistic context will require the presence of a number of conventions, or agreement on the use of words and expressions, in order to establish a correlation between the expression and specific types or classes of states-of-affairs, as well as the -- so to speak -- rock-bottom conventions with respect to the use of

this expression in relation to this state-of-affairs.⁶ That which is verified, then, is not the thing, or state-of-affairs, nor the meaning, nor the written or spoken statement, but the assertion made by the use of a specific linguistic vehicle or token.

These distinctions, restrictions, and limitations take one a long way from the theses of early positivism, but despite the necessary reservations the minimal statement of the principle of verifiability still applies to metaphysical or theological statements which purport to communicate information, and at least these conditions must be fulfilled if there is to be a distinction between warrantable statements and pseudo-assertions. If it is not possible to show that these basic logical demands can be satisfied, it will be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to claim that putative religious and theistic statements are assertions, with the further consequence that it will be difficult to show that religious or theistic statements have any cognitive value whatsoever.

A: The Problem.

Whether theistic statements do, in fact, have any cognitive value, such that one might justifiably claim that something is

⁶ These two types of conventions are J.L. Austin's "descriptive" and "historic" conventions, developed in his discussion of "Truth". Vide, his Philosophical Papers (Oxford, 1961), p.89.

or can be known through the use of religious discourse, it is nevertheless undeniably the case that some theistic statements have the appearance of being assertions. It is also true, of course, that only in the restricted and highly sophisticated context of theological discussion might one find statements prefaced by the expressions "it is asserted that ...", or "it is the case that ...". But contexts and situations abound where it certainly appears that the believer or the person uttering the statement intends to make a claim that some transcendent being exists or some non-natural state-of-affairs does, in fact, hold. So, a believer might insist that God has acted in his life, delivering him from the bondage of sin and death. It might be claimed that this statement is nothing more than a first-person psychological statement, with the tempting reduction of the cognitive significance, if any, to propositions descriptive of personal feelings and attitudes. Whether such a reduction is a conceptual possibility or not is of little importance here; what is of importance is that the believer obviously intends that the factual presupposition that there is some transcendent divine being can be expressed in a statement which is both meaningful and true. This factual presupposition can, indeed, be readily expanded into the assertion, "there is a supreme being, having the name 'God', and having the predicates normatively ascribed by the western theological tradition, a being who acts directly or indirectly on or through the processes, things, or functions

of things in the natural order." Examples of statements which clearly presuppose this assertion and which appear to be assertive statements can be multiplied endlessly: a very brief examination of the scriptures provides numerous statements which are evidently proposed by the authors as true statements, descriptive of some non-natural being or non-natural state-of-affairs.⁷ Many of these statements can be described as rhetorical, mythical, or metaphorical, or to include elements of these as a part of their meaning, but it is reasonably clear that the significance of many of these statements is not merely these elements so far as their authors are concerned. It is highly doubtful that the authors of the scriptural statements would have been satisfied with the claim that their statements and associated beliefs have merely a heuristic value; the claims have the force of conviction, and the character of this conviction is that the beliefs are true.

It is one thing to note, however, that many religious and theistic statements have the appearance of being assertions,

7 It is hardly necessary to cite examples, but the following are typical:

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth," (Gen. I, 1)

"We know that in everything God works for good with those who love him, who are called according to his purpose. (Rom. 8:28)

"For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then shall I understand fully, even as I have been fully understood. (I Cor. 13:12)

but quite another matter to show that the statements are, in fact, assertions. Because of the ever-present possibility that the linguistic form may be deceptive -- for example, confusion of the grammatical indicative with the logical form of the assertive utterance -- the question whether the theistic statements are assertions is of considerable importance. If, however, these theistic statements are assertions, then the minimum verifiability must be satisfiable, but difficulties immediately arise when even the limited form of the principle is used -- to say nothing of the formulation utilized by the classical logical positivists. Some of the basic terms in theistic statements are such expressions as "divine causality", "divine love", "fore-ordination", and of course "God". If statements containing these terms are to be counted as real assertions, it must be possible to specify some actual or possible experience (sensible or affective) to which the statements refer, or to which the statements can be related. But as logical empiricists are quick to point out, and as some theologians would be prepared to admit in any case, it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to state the empirical conditions which would have to hold in order to justify the claim that these theistic statements are truth-functional. The critique of theistic statements using a form of the early verifiability requirement is well known, but because of its importance for the present problem it will be worth-while to re-state it, and Ayer's analysis of theistic statements is perhaps classical and certainly incisive within

the context of this theory of significance.⁸ All statements must be classed as either tautologies, contradictions, synthetic statements, or expressions of feeling or attitude. If theistic statements are tautologies then, of course, they cannot be factually significant. If they are expressions of feeling then, equally, they cannot be factually significant by definition. Since they do not appear to be contradictory statements, this leaves only the possibility that they are synthetic in character. But if they are synthetic, they are either statements having immediate reference to sense-data or they are empirical hypotheses and hence probable propositions. If it is argued that the theistic statement, "there is a divine being transcendent to the natural order who has the power to shape and determine events in the natural order", is an empirical hypothesis, then it ought to be possible to deduce additional empirical propositions from this hypothesis, which, along with other empirical hypotheses, will confirm the statement -- if it is confirmable at all. Since no sense-data statements can be cited or admitted as immediate evidence for a divine being, the only alternative appears to be that this and similar theistic statements must be interpreted as empirical hypotheses. But, as Ayer argues, all that can be found which might support any such probabilistic hypothesis will be a certain amount of law-like regularity in nature. The consequence of this, however, is that the meaning of the theistic statement is no more

8 A.J. Ayer, Language, Truth, and Logic, p. 114.

than the appropriate and cumulative order and regularity, and no theist would want to admit that "God" means nothing more than a selection of natural laws.

Ayer's criticism is weakened by his insistence on the necessity for conclusive verification, and by the difficulty which he has in showing that the theoretical terms of physics, such as 'electron' and 'positron', can be meaningful in terms of his theory of significance. But to note these difficulties is only to indicate that Ayer's rejection of theological statements is perhaps doubtful. A more sophisticated logical empiricist still has the weakened form of the verifiability requirement in his arsenal and this weapon has been effectively employed by Flew in his demand that the theist be prepared to show that his assertions are at least falsifiable.⁹ Flew's argument is relatively simple and -- because it relies upon the deductive rule of double negation -- compelling. To assert that something is the case is equivalent to denying that something else is the case (that is, "it is the case that p" is equivalent to "it is not the case that not-p.") If one is in doubt whether a proposed statement is an assertion, one way to find out is to discover what the person uttering the statement would consider as counting against its truth, and to know the meaning of the negation is a very convenient way of disclosing the meaning of the affirmative assertion. Hence, if the statements "God has a plan for all men", "God

⁹ Antony Flew, "Theology and Falsification," in New Essays in Philosophical Theology, ed. by A. Flew and A. Macintyre, p. 96.

created the world," or "God loves us", are assertions, then it should be possible to state some counter-instances which will count as falsifying the statements. Flew's point is that, particularly with respect to the expression "God loves us", it appears that the believer is not prepared to admit anything as possibly falsifying the statement. The facts of suffering, misfortune, and evil are not admitted, and the believer has a tendency to qualify his statements with some such covering reservation as "indeed these are serious difficulties, but nevertheless God does love us." Similarly, the predicates traditionally ascribed to the divine fall prey to endless qualifications of an analogous type: if the theologian attempts to give an explanation of evil or suffering by appealing to a higher good or a hidden plan, because of the functioning of the traditional attributes of omnipotence and omniscience, the explanation is either inconsistent or it "dies a death of a thousand qualifications" with the theologian's final admission that no possible events or circumstances could possibly falsify the claim. The consequence of this is that either the theists statements are meaningless or -- if the theist still insists that a number of objective facts evidently offer confirmation for the statement -- his statement has one of the basic properties of an analytic statement, namely that it is not falsifiable by any empirical states-of-affairs. The theist's reaction to a demand for counter-instances can, therefore, be interpreted in two ways: refusal to admit any contrary empirical states-of-affairs may be a stubborn and

basically irrational attitude, or the process of questioning merely points up the theist's doubts and confusions about his own statements. If the former allegation is correct, then the theist is obviously refusing to adhere to the norms and canons of rationality such that faith, at its base, is evidently an irrational attitude; and if the second description is the case, then the theist turns out to be conceptually confused. Both allegations, presumably, are a part of Flew's case.

The argument is concise and impressive, but it is not decisive. A theist has at least one other alternative which quite easily avoids Flew's challenge. Most theists would be prepared to admit that statements about God are not empirically falsifiable hypotheses -- not, at least, in the way in which the Galenic theory about the behaviour of the blood was an empirical hypothesis and directly falsifiable. Empirical conditions alone cannot falsify a statement such as "God is love", although negative considerations may have considerable weight in disconfirming such statements. One of the important reasons for this, of course, is that the being denoted by the central subject-term, "God", is not an item or object in immediate sensuous experience. At best, the description of God must take the form of a conjunction of predicates such that (stated meta-linguistically) the description would occur in the syntactic form "'God' means (predicates) 'X', 'Y', 'Z', ..." and given these predicates, it will be possible to infer a number of empirically testable consequences, for example, 'a', 'b', 'c', ... If, then, the theistic

statement is to be interpreted as an hypothesis, its meta-linguistic formulation would be, "if what we mean by 'God' is given by the predicates 'X', 'Y', 'Z', ..., then 'a', 'b', 'c', ..., are possible consequences." But this will mean that the subject-term 'God' is a central term in a more or less complex theoretical hypothesis. On this supposition it is quite incorrect to suppose that contrary or negative instances (the contrary facts of evil, for example) falsify the statement "God is love"--any more so than the Michelson-Morley experiment falsified the wave-propagation theory of light. Application of the rule of modus tollens to the hypothetical statement, given that one of the consequents is empirically false, leads to the falsity of the entire antecedent. But what is usually overlooked is that the antecedent is a complex conjunctive proposition, and if it is supposed, for example, that the concept of 'God' is constituted from a number of different predicates such as 'personal', 'loving', 'just', 'wise', etc., these can be stated in the form of a series of assumptions about God (and perhaps the relation of God to the world). When this complex of concepts is interpreted as a conjunction of assumptions, negation of the whole antecedent produces a series of negated disjuncts.¹⁰ In this

¹⁰ This is clearer when given a symbolic statement: suppose the complex conditional has the form $(a \cdot b \cdot c \cdot \dots) \supset i$, where 'i' is an empirical consequence. Then the negation of i ($\sim i$), by modus tollens, produces $\sim (a \cdot b \cdot c \cdot \dots)$. But this statement, by the use of De Morgan's theorem, is equivalent to $(\sim a \vee \sim b \vee \sim c \vee \dots)$.

case the antecedent can only be said to be false if all of the original assumptions are shown to be false. Stated in other terms, all the theist need do is admit that the occurrence of contrary or negative instances forces the admission that at least one of the assumptions is false -- and it may be very difficult to decide which of the several is to be discarded. Hence, the facts of evil need only be said to force some revision of the theoretical hypothesis, not its total rejection, and one way to accomplish this would be to adjust the sense and meaning of the basic predicates, or to add or discard other predicates. It is quite possible, of course, that given a specific concept of God, to take all of the assumptions separately and show that they are false, but the reply to this is: so much the worse for that concept of 'God'. Consultation of the religious traditions of mankind will provide several alternatives.

Under these considerations, neither the positivistic critique nor the criticisms of logical empiricism have shown that theistic statements are meaningless -- unless those supporting this type of empiricism wish to discard most of modern physics. Indeed, it is a consequence of this line of analysis that theology remains an intellectual discipline, and perhaps a science, in much the traditional pattern, and is a perfectly rational possibility (given that the restrictions and limitations which will be developed subsequently are admitted). If the theist is prepared to step outside the boundaries of a canonic (or revealed) tradition, it is quite possible for him to continue

inventing, testing, and discarding elements in the theoretical hypothesis -- an activity which will need to take into account the developments of human knowledge and understanding. Nor does a theist who opts for this kind of program need to take seriously Macintyre's ad hominem attempt to strengthen Flew's argument.

A part of the content of the Christian belief in God, Macintyre argues, is the demand for a decisive adherence to God.¹¹ To hold that religious, and in particular, theistic beliefs are hypothetical in character is to reject this demand and ultimately to nullify any significance for the term "faith". Hypotheses are tentative and provisional in nature and are to be discarded when the evidence is against them. In practice, to commit oneself to a hypothesis in the manner in which a religious person commits himself to God would be both unwarranted and dangerous. But Macintyre is quite unclear as to the significance of the term "adherence" and how theistic or religious adherence differs from the adherence one may give to an ordinary well-confirmed empirical hypothesis or, in the case of a practicing scientist, adherence to a well-confirmed theoretical hypothesis. The resistance which some physicists have for giving up their theories is very little different from the resistance some theists may have for giving up their beliefs.

These considerations constitute a partial defense of a type of speculative theology and a restricted variety of natural

¹¹ Metaphysical Beliefs, ed. by A. Macintyre (London, 1957), p. 181ff.

theology (although the term 'natural theology' cannot have quite its traditional meaning). But there are a number of restrictions and limitations intrinsic to this theological method. The critique by logical positivism was clearly naive and the objections of a simplicistic logical empiricism can be easily countered; but Christian theism cannot be equated with a type of science either in its reflective formulations or in its practical utility for the worshipping believer, even though there is a distinct possibility for a conceptual development and a theological program which has a number of affinities with scientific endeavour. But to consider central theological statements to be hypotheses rules out the possibility of including much that has been demanded by the traditional Christian understanding. If theology were taken to be only the elaboration and confirmation of theoretical hypotheses, then the central term 'God' cannot be said to be a name, but a complex concept -- a consequence which makes personal address of the divine an impossibility. Furthermore, there is the tempting alternative of claiming that the entire significance of the central concept is given by the collection of statements taken to constitute an appropriate and adequate definition of the central term -- in other words, that the significance of 'God' is given entirely, and only, by the semantics and syntax of theistic discourse. Because the central term occurs in the subject-position of indicative statements, it will appear to have a referential character, but the reference can quite properly be said to be, not some extra-mental or extra-

natural being but the sum total of all those empirical or lower level statements which link up the theoretical hypothesis with ordinary individual or communal experience. The immediate problem which faces this variety of theism, then, is how to distinguish this theism from pantheism. It is, of course, true that the terms 'electron' and 'positron' are said to denote entities, but these are theoretical entities within the context of theoretical hypotheses, and whether there actually exist such entities is a largely irrelevant question -- indeed, one which is beyond all logical possibility of direct and immediate verification. But the question whether there exists some divine being distinct from what is taken to be the world or universe has been a traditionally important question. Few theists would want to say that the basic concepts of the traditional faith are really explanatory in character, and that belief in God involves nothing more than merely the intellectual apprehension of a conceptual structure. If this proposed theism is understood to be purely hypothetical in character, it will be very difficult to justify worship, for, to say the least, there is something very paradoxical about worshipping a theoretical entity. For similar reasons it will be quite impossible to make sense out of the Christian doctrine of hope; immortality and an eternal life with God cannot be given sense and meaning since both of these states are supposedly non-natural in character, and it is difficult to see how a non-natural state can be described when the only vehicle for description is naturalistic

terms and expressions.

These remarks are not intended to constitute a refutation of the variety of theological endeavour which is a possibility within the context of logical empiricism, but only to show some of the limitations incumbent upon such a program, limitations which require a departure from traditional Christian doctrines. Up to an easily identifiable point, logical empiricism is perfectly compatible with theology -- indeed, as will be subsequently argued, it can provide the theologian with some very powerful techniques. But beyond this point where the difficulties begin to emerge, it would appear that the basic theses of this philosophical program are unable to provide an account of a number of elements in the traditional theistic faith. To sum up, these difficulties are, (1) that there is no way of differentiating this theism from pantheism, (2) that unless the central term 'God' can be said to have, or be given, a reference, it can at best be merely a theoretical term which is referentially opaque, and (3) any doctrine of eternal life or immortality must remain meaningless. If this latter difficulty is to be overcome, it must be shown that the cognitive status of theological propositions is somewhat richer than can be the case in views which ascribe only a theoretical status to the central term. If, in other words, logical empiricism is to provide a conceptual base for the interpretation of theistic propositions, it must be possible to show that statements about God have a richer information-potential (or have an assertive function) than

this condition which contemporary logical empiricism refuses to admit.

So far, this discussion has been couched in terms of assertions and truth-functional statements. It has been assumed that some theistic statements not only appear to be assertions but that theism stands or falls on the question of whether or not a justification can be given for the claim that they are bona fide assertions. It has been argued that, since statements referring to theoretical entities can be assertions, if the term 'God' is considered to be a theoretical entity, the same can be claimed for some theistic statements, although the restrictions and limitations which must be imposed leave serious doubts about the possibility of a theistic faith in its traditional sense. The general structure of this discussion, however, would not meet with approval from a considerable number of contemporary philosophers who would argue that the whole approach to the problems of theistic statements is basically wrong-headed. The question whether or not theistic statements are assertions ought not to have been raised in the first place for the reason that it is not the function of religious statements to make assertions. It has been argued by Alasdair Mackinnon, for example, that the question of the unfalsifiability of theistic statements arose because of a confusion about the nature of religious language.¹² What is required, on the contrary, is a

¹² Alasdair Mackinnon, "Unfalsifiability and the Uses of Religious Language," American Philosophical Quarterly, Vol. 2 (1965), p. 229ff.

careful description of, and not a theory about, religious language.

Because this line of argument and analysis stands in sharp contrast and opposition to the general purpose and methods of this study, it must be examined in some detail. Mackinnon distinguishes three different uses of discourse which he calls the "assertional", "self-instructional", and the "ontological-linguistic". To these uses are linked two distinct and different uses of the central and key concepts of the system of discourse, namely the "determinate" use and the "heuristic" use. To develop his argument he introduces an analogy or model taken from the context of practical scientific activity. A model expression (in the assertional use) for a practicing scientist might be, "the world has a determinate, and specifiable, order," where the central concept of "order" has a determinate meaning since the individual can specify a number of predicates which will count as his working definition of "order". In most circumstances there will be no trouble with the concept, but if the practicing scientist should come upon an event, or group of events, which are anomalous so far as he can see (Eddington's remote possibility that the kettle freezes when placed on the hot stove, for example) then his determinate concept of "order" will fail him. But it does not follow that he must therefore discard the term; what he may now do is to rely upon the heuristic use of the term within the context of the self-instructional use of discourse. In this mode of discourse

he may tell himself that, despite appearances to the contrary, order is present in the events, and that the world still has a definite order -- whatever that order may be. In this particular context, however, the term "order" does not have a definite and specifiable meaning. It is a matter of using discourse in such a way that it supports a program of investigation even though the details or procedure of the investigation may not be clear at all. But, so Mackinnon argues, this is not only a case of the heuristic use of a central term in the self-instructional mode, but a close inspection of the logic of the discourse indicates that it is also a case of the ontological-linguistic use of discourse. This function comes out most clearly in the presupposition, "the world must have some order." This expression, however, could not possibly be false:

Utterances like "The world has order (m)" are repeatedly defeated, but "The world has an order," just because it is a loose and elliptical form, is never subject to final defeat. The case of the third sense is of course quite different. Here the scientist is not alleging that the world is some particular way; he is not making a claim which might either be supported by evidence or refuted by further evidence. Rather he is saying that the world has order in the heuristic sense and that is a claim which, because the term is so used, could not possibly be false. The world might lack any particular order; it might even lack the order it presently has; but it does not and cannot lack order as such. What the scientist intends in this case is both true and necessarily true.¹³

What ever one may think of the claim that the expression, "the world must have some order" is an analytic and necessary

13 Ibid, p. 233

proposition -- and it is highly doubtful whether every sense of the term "world" entails some concept of order -- what is interesting here is the application of this model to theistic assertions. The expression "God loves us", Mackinnon claims, has similar uses. The central term 'God' can be said to have both a determinate and a heuristic use, and the whole expression may function in such a way that it illustrates an assertional, self-instructional, and ontological-linguistic use. Thus, a believer may have a determinate concept of 'God' derived from some religious tradition which may allow him the assertional use and the claim that God does, in fact, love us -- until he is forced to face the facts of evil and suffering when the factual claims made with this determinate concept are defeated. In such a situation, the determinate concept itself begins to deteriorate. But instead of discarding the term the believer may rely on a heuristic use of the term and insist, in the self-instructional tone of voice, that nevertheless God does love us, even though it is difficult to see how this is possible in the face of the negative facts. But, Mackinnon suggests, the term 'God' then means something like 'the ultimate reality' or the 'ultimate reality, whatever that should prove to be,' and the term here must then be said to lack and determinate meaning. And, as in the case of the scientist, it is quite possible to discover here an ontological-linguistic use of the expression "God loves us". When forced by the facts of evil and suffering to retract his determinate senses of the terms 'God' and 'love' and to rely upon the ontological-linguistic

use of the expression, the believer is in effect using an expression which is necessarily true. Mackinnon insists that

... there can be no question of the existence of God thus conceived. That there is such a God is a necessary and indubitable truth, a truth which is distorted in the traditional "God exists" but which can perhaps be expressed in the form "God(X) exists." This formulation in any event makes it clear that one is not asserting the contingent existence of a being but the necessary existence of Reality or Being as such.¹⁴

Whether it is the believer's intention to do so or not he is holding that God (where this term has now an indeterminate sense) must necessarily exist, and this consequence arises simply as a result of coming to learn the language of religion.

Mackinnon's general argument is, then, that the question of whether or not religious language is unfalsifiable is a question which should not be asked in the first place. There is a superficial assertive use of this discourse, and it is certainly the case that, given a specific and determinate concept of 'God', the believer makes claims. But defeat of the assertions does not mean that the religious language dissolves, which ought to be the case if these were strict assertions; on the contrary, the language merely takes on a self-instructional and ontological-linguistic use. The basic task in the investigation of religious discourse is not that of giving a justification for the assertive use or to find grounds for asserting a statement such as "God loves us" when the facts are against it, but rather to describe the

¹⁴ Ibid, p. 235

logical characteristics of the language. Description,^L not justification is what is demanded; the description, if accurate, is its own justification. Religious discourse is an item in the human universe and insofar as this is the case it is on a par with the other discernible items. Like these other linguistic items, it is complex and many-faceted, and failure to note these facets carefully can only lead to confusion.

Since Mackinnon has used the distinctively philosophical categories of assertion, ontological, necessity, etc., it may be valuable and important to note some of the additional features which are associated with, or consequences of, these general terms. An examination of these additional properties will make it quite clear that a simple description of the facets of religious discourse is neither satisfactory nor sufficient. It is certainly true, as Mackinnon would probably agree, that it is not possible to worship and have some doubts about the existence of the divine being, and it would also be correct to say that in some sense of the term 'necessary' some theistic statements are necessarily true. But it is also quite clear that the ontological-linguistic function of discourse using heuristic terms produces, on Mackinnon's analysis, expressions which are vacuous and without any significance whatsoever. Since this was Flew's point, it is at least the case that a simple description using these categories is in no way superior to Flew's methods. Furthermore, alternative descriptions of the origin of necessity in the context of faith and religious discourse are clearly possible. One such alternative might be the

following: as will be argued in a subsequent chapter of the present study, one of the important logical features of faith is the occurrence of necessity in the context of religious belief. But it is precisely the occurrence of this necessity which demands careful philosophical criticism, and it is not quite correct to say that when the statements have this necessity they are empty or honorific tautologies. To state the matter much too briefly and summarily, it seems much more plausible to describe this logical feature as arising from that which might be called an 'act of faith' and not simply as a result of using a certain type of discourse. Outside the context of faith or religious belief perhaps the best that can be said for the existence of a divine being is "it is possibly the case that there is such a being," and "it is possibly the case that there is no such being." When translated into the usual symbols of modal logic this becomes ($\Diamond p \cdot \Diamond \sim p$), which is the usual definition of "contingency" and would be the case then of asserting that the divine being is a contingent being. One of the characteristics of faith, however, is a denial of contingency as an attribute of God, and hence a denial of both elements of possibility in the description of God as a being who might possibly exist and who might possibly not exist. This facet of faith, therefore, can be understood as a denial of the expression ($\Diamond p \cdot \Diamond \sim p$), or $\sim(\Diamond p \cdot \Diamond \sim p)$. But this merely converts the conjunction into a pair of negated disjuncts, or $(\sim \Diamond p \vee \sim \Diamond \sim p)$. In terms of the usual definitions of the modal terms, this is read as "either

the existence of God is impossible or the existence of God is necessary." Since the existence of God is admitted to be possible and in terms of the ordering of the modalities the first disjunct can be dismissed such that, within the context of faith, the existence of God becomes necessary.

This, however, is not the only account of the origin of necessity, and it may be possible to argue the thesis that the derivation of necessity can occur external to the context of faith and worship, but still dependent upon the meaning of the central term 'God'. In this case, the origin of necessity depends upon the ordering of the concepts and not upon what Mackinnon calls the "self-instructional" use of discourse. It has been argued, for example, by Norman Malcolm that given the basic and central meaning of the term 'God' in the Judaeo-Christian tradition necessary existence is a property of this being.¹⁵ If this being is conceived as eternal then it could not have come into existence and cannot go out of existence. Given this concept, it leads to self-contradiction and unintelligibility to claim to have grasped the concept and still deny the existence of this being (assuming the rule a necesse esse ad esse valet consequentia). For on the basis of what is meant by the term, the existence of this being is entailed.

It is quite possible, then, to give alternative accounts both of the nature and the origin of the necessity characteristic

¹⁵ Norman Malcolm, "Anselm's Ontological Arguments," The Philosophical Review, Vol. LXIX (January, 1960).

of faith, and it is not clear that they are compatible, nor which is to be adopted as the most adequate. This, however, is a philosophical question and is clearly not to be answered by simple description. Furthermore, if the logical category of necessity is admitted, then there does not seem to be any reason why one ought not to proceed as far as the methods will permit. This is particularly the case since it is the necessity of faith which causes a number of difficulties; at least one sense of "necessary being" permits the inference to "existing being", or appears to do so, and if this consequence were acceptable then it also follows that by thought alone one can over-populate the universe. In opposition to this move, the following points have considerable weight: while there is a sense of necessity in faith, and the possibility of constructing a concept such that necessary existence is entailed, this surely holds only in what is called the material mode of speech or object-language where the reference is to things, states-of-affairs, events, etc., rather than to parts of speech or propositions. Since the point of asking whether an object exists or not is to determine whether or not that to which reference is made is a real or fictitious being, it is both legitimate and necessary to ask the question whether the concept of the "divine" names, denotes, or describes anything at all -- particularly in view of the many competing concepts of "God". Hence -- shifting to the meta-language -- what one must say is "if there is a being denoted by the expression,

'some being is eternal, who could not have come into existence and who could not have gone out of existence,' then this being necessarily exists." But this, in effect, is to move to second-order modalities and it is to allow the assertion that the existence of this being, if it exists at all, necessarily exists, and hence that the existence of a necessary being is possible, $(\Diamond \Box p)$.¹⁶ Hence, while it is perhaps paradoxical, the expression "God necessarily exists" does not mean quite the same as "there is a God", and only if the doubtful thesis that all second-order modalities collapse into first order or assertoric statements is admitted can it be claimed that "God necessarily exists" entails "there is a God". In any case, use of the distinctively logical categories and terms for the purposes of descriptive analysis carries with it the additional consequences derivable from these expressions, and since for some persons, at least, all God-talk is about a purely fictitious being, it will not do to suppose that description is alone sufficient or that it is its own justification.

B: The Proposal.

It has been indicated that an analysis of theistic statements couched in terms of the categories and methods of logical empiricism has to deal with at least two serious difficulties, namely the imminent danger of a reduction to a crude type of

¹⁶ This theme has considerable importance and will be elaborated in greater detail in the subsequent chapter.

pantheism, and the necessity of justifying the claim that the term 'God' can have a real or "material" reference. Both of these difficulties are connected with the informative or assertive character of some theistic statements. There are, however, a number of additional difficulties which quickly arise within this context; if it is not possible to justify the assertive function for theistic statements (or, in slightly different terms, to justify the claim that the truth claims of religion are truth-claims) it may then be quite legitimate to argue that the language of religion is purely expressive in character. This, in turn, gives rise to an echo of the Feuerbachian thesis that religion is a projection of the human self-consciousness, such that religion is basically an illusion. Nor is it much comfort to the theist to be told that, despite the impossibility of ever making good on the assertive component, religious discourse has an important value for mankind insofar as the stories and parables assist in living a certain kind of moral life. For in this case religion becomes a purely ancillary feature of human existence.¹⁷

These difficulties seem to indicate that the empiricistic approach may create more problems than advantages. It might perhaps be better to give up all empiricistic principles and theses, particularly since contemporary empiricism does not appear to give one any clues as to the way in which these challenges can be met. The truth of the matter may just be

17 Cf. R.B. Braithwaite, An Empiricist's View of the Nature of Religious Belief (Cambridge, 1955).

that religious discourse does not have the capacity for an assertive function, and that it is either ineradicably anthropomorphic or it is without any significance at all, while the pantheistic identification is prevented only by an arbitrary appeal to something called an inexpressible feeling of wrongness. The sceptical conclusion then seems to be that intellectual integrity and honesty requires that these persons, the theists, admit these points with the consequence that if one still insists on the use of religious discourse, to expect only that the language has some therapeutic value and perhaps can give some support for a specific set of moral and ethical principles. In no case ought one to make claims for religion which are clearly indefensible and the product of conceptual confusion.

This sceptical conclusion, however, is much too hasty, and it is the general purpose of this study to illustrate and argue for the position that such pessimism is without any substantial basis. These problems and difficulties do not require the rejection of the techniques of conceptual analysis, or the admission that theism is incompatible with the basic elements of moderate empiricism. It is historically the case that at least one philosopher, logician, and theologian, William of Ockham, did not find the theses of modified empiricism and the methods of logical analysis incompatible or inconsistent with the affirmations of the Christian faith -- an empiricism and set of logical methods which bear a striking similarity

with the twentieth century analytic tradition.¹⁸ Although somewhat limited by his theory of significance and lacking some of the contemporary techniques of analysis and symbolism, Ockham provided the general outlines of a defense of the claim that theistic statements are both informative and that an assertive function could be attributed to some of these statements. In no case was the insistence upon careful distinctions detrimental to the apprehension of the essential propositions of the faith. Precisely the contrary; the demands of rational reflection require the use of rigorous techniques while the need to limit the possible extravagances of reason and imagination force the admission of the basic theses of modified empiricism.

18 As is true of many scholastic figures, little is known about the life of Ockham. He was probably born at Ockham in Surrey (although there are some grounds for the view that his name was simply William Ockham) about the year 1285. He became a member of the Franciscan order and a subdeacon about or shortly after 1300. From this time until about 1324 he passed through the traditional program of studies as a student and then as a teacher, lecturing on the bible and the sentences of the Lombard. About 1323 the former Chancellor of Oxford, John Lutterell, professed to find a number of heretical theses in his works and in 1324 Ockham was summoned before the Avignon papal court. For reasons which are not clear, the trial was prolonged over a period of three years, but before a decision was reached Ockham fled from Avignon with Michael of Cesena, the general of his order. Both men took refuge with Ludwig of Bavaria, who was then in Pisa, and followed the court to Munich, where Ockham seems to have remained until he died about 1348-49. During this Munich period Ockham was primarily concerned with a spirited debate over evangelical poverty and the temporal authority of the papacy. His theological and logical treatises seem to have been completed by about the year 1327, with the Summa Totius Logicae probably the last work of a distinctly logical nature. (Cf. L. Baudry, Guillaume d'Occam: Sa Vie, ses Oeuvres, ses Idees Sociales et Politiques (Paris, 1950); Philotheus Boehner, "Der Stand der Ockham-Forschung," reprinted in Collected Articles on Ockham (St. Bonaventure, 1958) ed. by E. M. Buytaert.

It is of considerably more than incidental value, therefore, that an examination of Ockham's characteristic theses be undertaken. The present study is an attempt to elaborate these central theses to determine the extent to which Ockhamism is capable of defending the claims that some theistic statements are assertions in the richer sense of the term indicated above, and that a modified empiricism does not entail a reduction of the semantic content to pantheism or descriptions of psychological states. It will be shown that, while Ockhamism does not provide a wholly satisfactory answer to these question, what it does provide is the general outlines of what appears to be a satisfactory solution.

William of Ockham is a much-maligned and misunderstood figure. He is somewhat unusual in the history of philosophy and theology in that, while he himself was responsible for the initiation of a distinctive school of thought, his works themselves were not reprinted or made available until recently. He is perhaps best known for the principle of economy, the so-called Ockham's Razor, a principle which he did not invent and which he, along with many of his predecessors and contemporaries, derived from Aristotle. This principle is best interpreted as a semantic principle and not a metaphysical rule which permits the dismissal of entities from the universe, since Ockham himself has a rather rich ontology. So far as this principle is concerned, Ockham's claim to fame (or notoriety) arises from the rigor, precision, (and for some, the ruthlessness)

with which he used this semantic rule, namely that unless it can be shown that the term incorporates a distinction or signifies something it is without any meaning. Despite the fact that many of his theories and logical principles can be traced to previous thinkers, he is a highly original thinker. His originality comes from the acuteness with which he grasped the problems and theories of his intellectual heritage, the range of his philosophical and theological interests, and the penetration of his criticisms. He is often accused of being a cold and narrow-minded logician, but it is also true that in his later life he was also an impassioned critic of ecclesiastical and political movements, although even here it is possible to detect the same rigor and logical acumen manifest in his more academic works. His influence on subsequent generations can hardly be challenged; he was the inspiration of the nominalist (or more correctly, terminist) movement in fourteenth century philosophy, and his conclusions in theology created a decided shift in the subsequent theological climate, with this influence reaching at least as far as Luther and the reformation.

No examination of Ockham's solutions to these problems is possible without a detailed study of his ontological, logical, and semantic theories, but since the general and characteristic theses of Ockhamism are not well-known, it may be of some value to give a sketch of these by way of introduction to the detailed doctrines. The description must, of necessity, be extremely attenuated; in the subsequent chapters these doctrine will be

given a further elaboration.¹⁹

Ockham's metaphysics is pluralistic and atomistic. The real entities are singular and individual in character. Ontologically, singulars are the ultimate and final entities and since being and existing are synonymous terms (or roughly so), if singulars have any reality or being this can be expressed by saying that they exist. The singulars, or only real beings, cannot be explained in terms of something, although they may be caused by some other being; they are the ultimate or atomic elements which in collection, aggregation, or conjunction, constitute the totality of the extra-mental world or created universe. Between or among the singulars may be a number of different relations, but relations are not another kind of entity along with singulars.

Everything outside the mind is said to be singular and individual in character, but singulars, as known, are mediated by sense-experience. In this case, the ontology is purely formal insofar as the reference is to the extra-mental ontological object in contrast with the epistemological object. If the extra-mental singulars are described as subjects, their epistemological or formal analogue is approximately the concept of "logical subject" and the formal notion of contemporary logic, the general function, is a fairly accurate interpretative concept -- although, of course, this was unknown to Ockham.

¹⁹ Cf. Frederick Copleston, A History of Western Philosophy (Westminster, 1953), Vol. III; Paul Vignaux, Philosophy in the Middle Ages (New York, 1959) trans. by E.C. Hall.

The first object in the order of knowledge is again the individual-as-known and the individual-as-mediated-by-sensation. This thesis stands in sharp contrast with the thesis that the first element known by the understanding according to the primacy of generation is the universal or common element, and is perhaps the most basic thesis of Ockham's empiricism, distinguishing his approach most clearly from his predecessors. It is the assertion that all claims for knowledge must be traced back to that which is evident for some conscious being, and this perception may be either sensitive (the 'public' data) or intellective (the 'private' data). Both of these types of perception are called instances of intuitive cognition, and from such intuitive cognitions arise all the varieties of knowledge, judgment, and the apprehension of truth and falsity. Cognition, however, is of two types; intuitive cognition is acquaintance with the singular-as-perceived, and does not include a reference to universals, such that in order to account for the element of generality in knowledge another mental function must be included. This function is that of abstraction, and the relevant type of cognition is called "abstractive cognition". This may be either what Ockham calls "abstracting from existence or non-existence of the particular thing" or the formation of a general concept applicable to many particulars.

All knowledge, true or false, is propositional in character. In the strict sense of "to know" (scire), that which is known is always, and only, the proposition -- although there is

a weaker sense of the term (cognoscere) which is appropriate to immediate acquaintance (or knowledge by acquaintance), such that Ockham can speak of knowing the object given in immediate sensuous experience. All propositions are molecular entities with terms constituting the atomic elements. These terms have a (posited) correlate in the realm of extra-mental realities, while supposedly the molecular entity or proposition also has some relation with the extra-mental realities. The class of terms comprises the class of possible logical subjects and predicates and hence determines the class of possible propositions. Considered by themselves, terms are mental entities described as intentions. These intentions are divisible into precisely defined classes, namely first intentions, or terms having reference to real, existing, objects which are not themselves signs or intentions, and second intentions, which are terms referring to other terms, signs or intentions. This distinction then incorporates the distinction between language or discourse about things and discourse about discourse, and is roughly parallel to the object-language, meta-language distinction common in contemporary philosophy.

Within the context of propositional knowledge the discovery of a contradiction will be one of the most reliable ways of demonstrating a distinction in reality. A contradiction excludes the opposite proposition and all contradictions stand on the same plane, namely "equally repugnant". When a contradiction is discernible, or when a distinction is forced by a contradiction,

it must be said that the two things to which a reference is now made cannot be numerically or quantitatively identical, and a distinction in thought therefore in many cases will mirror a distinction in reality. But while Ockham admits the weakened "real distinction" the formal distinction is admitted only for the doctrine of the trinity. Since the extra-mental realities are singular individuals, there is no common reality such as one or more universals linking them together. The only reality which universals, such as genera and species, can be said to have is that of concepts-in-the-mind. Science has for its scope the entire created order, and is divided into real and rational science. Real science, or natural science (and this is descriptive and not experimental), is about existing beings for which there is sensible evidence, pro statu isto; rational science or logic has as its object the concepts, language, and propositions of real science, although it is not precisely limited to the domain of natural science and can include the theological propositions. There cannot be a science of theology, however, since the basic doctrines and propositions of this discipline are without factual or evidential grounds.

The theses of ontology apply in theology as well as to real science, with the important exception that the formal distinction may be admitted. God is a radically singular being, and is a being along with other beings. If God were beyond being, this would have to be interpreted as indicating that God could not be even an object of thought. Since God is a singular

being, strictly speaking it cannot be said that the divine essence has any plurality in it; intellect, will, and essence in God are strictly identical, but these may be said to be different expressions of the one being in much the same way that the intellect, will or volition are different expressions of the one human intellective soul. Formally, or at the level of concepts, it is necessary to say that the terms 'will', 'intellect', and 'essence' are synonymous -- but only in terms of what they denote, namely the same divine being. The primary subject of theology, God, is not a datum in immediate sensuous cognition, and since there is no intuitive cognition of this being in the present state, there can be no concepts proper to God alone. That some such being exists, along with the doctrines of the trinity and a number of other theological doctrines, is therefore said to be known only by faith; these propositions, particularly the existence of God, cannot be demonstrated from first principles since there is no evidential base for the terms, although the doctrines of the faith are both true and evident for the comprehensor and the beatus who have an immediate experience of God in some other non-natural state.

Metaphysical propositions have some significance, although the scope of metaphysical thought is restricted. The primary subject of metaphysics is being as such and in itself, but being is not the primary subject in the sense that the term names or denotes some common nature, but in the sense that being is the primary subject of predication. Metaphysics, then, for Ockham

has a very intimate connection with logic. Being and perfection are related and together provide a link between metaphysics and theology; being is the primary subject of metaphysics in terms of predication, while God is the primary subject of metaphysics in terms of the primacy of perfection.

Theology cannot be a science in the strict sense of the term but it does not follow that theological investigation is impossible or that theology is not amenable to rational reflection. Theological propositions are to be accepted by an act of faith and this act -- in part, but not wholly an intellectual act -- confers a number of distinctive logical properties on the statement accepted or believed. It does not follow that theological propositions have only an emotive significance (to use a recent designation), but Ockham is unclear just what degree of significance they have. When all of the qualifications have been added, however, it is clear that the Ockhamist conception of theology forces a radical change in the methods and program of theological investigation. The object of such an investigation cannot be said to be the real, existing, divine being, even though the formal object of theology, namely the revelation itself, is admitted. The object of the investigation is now the terms and the language which comprise the class of theological terms. In this case, to use a Barthian idiom which is at least partially appropriate, theology is the criticism of the language of faith. It is the analysis and synthesis of concepts stated or expressed in a meta-language. Its syntactic dimension is stated and des-

cribed by the principles of logic, while the semantic dimension includes the language of religious faith.

Ockham has been accused of a number of things and the most often repeated charges are that he, and those who adopted his methods, brought about the dissolution of the scholastic synthesis and the end of theology as a serious human endeavour. Whether these allegations are correct or not is not a concern of the present study, but it must be admitted that there is some justification for the claims. But this admission does not necessarily permit the claim that the allegations are true. It is true that there was a decline in theological productivity and religious piety in the decades subsequent to Ockham's productive period, but to suppose that Ockham's theories and methods brought about this state of affairs is an over-simplification and indicates the possibility of a genetic fallacy. Ockham himself did not apparently believe that his methods terminated theological investigation and it was certainly not his intention to destroy the significance of the Christian faith -- if indeed there are any grounds for the allegation at all. Gilson, however, may be correct in asserting that

In philosophy itself, this apprentice sorcerer has, not at all created, but unleashed and encouraged forces which he himself could not possibly control after setting them free.²⁰

But this may be taken to mean that his followers were not able to provide the techniques for dealing with the additional

²⁰ E. Gilson, History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages (New York, 1955), p. 498

problems which their master bequeathed them. Among these problems, perhaps the most critical is the meaning and significance of religious language for the individual in the present state and how theistic statements and theistic discourse in general is to be checked from a decline leading to a crude literalism -- with its inevitable consequence of base superstition. Neither Ockham nor his followers give any clear account of how this is to be avoided, but it does not follow that there is no possible set of considerations which will both preserve the claims for theistic discourse and prevent a reduction to literalism. It will be shown, on the contrary, that Ockham does provide the clues; what he does not give is an elaboration of these insights. With respect to the claim that Ockham was alone responsible for the dissolution of the scholastic synthesis, it can only be said that historically this is an exaggeration. It could, indeed, be argued that the alleged disaster was imminent after Aristotle was introduced into medieval Christendom, particularly so when the logical and semantic theories arising out of the Prior and Posterior Analytics were given a further development. In this case, Ockham -- who considered himself to be a thorough-going Aristotelian, even though he consciously corrected Aristotle on a number of points --- merely gave the historical development a greater impetus.

Ockham's greatest strength is his semantic and logical methods. These provided him with a set of conceptual tools

which permit a careful and detailed analysis of meaningfulness, whether the statements are about natural entities, moral beliefs, or religious beliefs. When applied to theological propositions Ockham is able to obtain a clarity and precision which is almost unique in the tradition, and which perhaps has not been matched since. It will therefore be of considerable interest to examine the extent to which these methods are productive of a satisfactory solution to the basic problems with which this study is concerned.

CHAPTER II

THE NEGATIVE THESES

One of the most important questions -- and perhaps the most important question -- for a theological apologetics is whether one can know either that there is a God or the properties which this being is supposed to have. This question is extremely complex but evidently no answer can be given until there has been some specification of the meaning which the terms 'can' and 'to know' may have in this context. 'Can' is a logical term which may indicate one of several different senses of 'possible' but it may also have the sense of 'ability' or 'being able'. 'Know' is, of course, an epistemic term and it is a common-place in contemporary philosophy to distinguish between 'knowing how', which indicates a capacity, disposition, or ability, and 'knowing that' (such-and-such). It is the latter sense which is of importance for the question, can one know the divine? The issue is concerned with the possibility of having some important, valuable, and true information about the supreme being.

The analysis of the expressions 'can' and 'to know' is complicated by a close inter-relationship of the logical and epistemic terms. There are senses of 'possible' which involve

an explicit reference to knowledge and cognitive states, while a description of these states entail a sense of the term 'possible' which is linked up with ability. It is usual, however, to discuss possibility in terms of logical possibility, causal or natural possibility, technical, and epistemic possibility. Logical possibility, in turn, must be distinguished into that which is possible simpliciter, or that which is entailed by the term 'necessary', and that which is included in the meaning of 'contingency' (or where the implication is that a specific state-of-affairs and its non-existence are both possible).¹ Associated with logical possibility is the term 'necessary', and possibility is often defined or described with the necessary as the primitive concept. Hence, the logically possible in this case is that which does not imply a contradiction or a self-contradiction. 'Causal' or 'natural' possibility (and its correlative, the naturally 'necessary') is logical possibility limited and conditioned by empirical facts, or by the scope of some theory, such that within the context of the given facts or theories some state-of-affairs can be said to be impossible or necessary or possible. It is important to note, however, that it is only within the context of the relevant circumstances or theories that the modalities can be said to apply; in separation from the limiting conditions an impossible state-of-affairs may become possible, and similarly for the limited and conditioned necessities. Technical possibility refers to that which can be achieved given the existing means

¹ A distinction originating with Aristotle, De Interpretatione, 12, 13.

at one's disposal.

A distinction has traditionally been made between knowledge and belief;² the conditions under which one can claim to have knowledge 'that such-and-such is the case' are quite different from, and generally much more rigorous than, the conditions under which one can justifiably claim to believe 'that such-and-such is the case'.³ With respect to the paradigm formula 'S knows that p' where S denotes some individual and p a proposition, it is important to distinguish two different senses of 'knowing that': this expression may be understood in terms of the expansion 'S believes that p, and p (or it is in fact the case that p)', or interpreted as 'S believes that p, S has adequate evidence for the assertion of p, and it is the case that p'. The conditions for the application of the latter, or strong sense, of 'to know' are considerably more restrictive

2 For those of the conviction that radical empiricism is defensible, this distinction will not hold.

3 Not all instances of belief are strictly speaking instances of 'belief that ...', since there are perfectly good senses of the term 'belief in ...'. Nor would it be correct to insist that all cases of 'belief in ...' presupposes a 'belief that ...'. Belief in democracy does not presuppose that democracy exists or even that it could exist. There are, however, some cases where this presupposition does occur; someone who believed fervently in a friend and admitted that he did not believe that his believed-in friend existed would be using the expression 'to believe in' in a peculiar and paradoxical manner. These considerations are readily applied to belief in God.

Similar considerations apply to an Austinian type of analysis; it is certainly the case that many items of religious discourse can be called instances of "behabitives", but behabitives, as Austin indicates, presuppose factual claims. If the factual claims are empty then the utterance becomes an infelicity. If this type of analysis is applied to religious statements and there is no support for the claims, then the entire discourse become infelicitous. (Cf. J.L. Austin, How to do Things With Words, p. 47ff).

than the former, or weak sense of 'to know that p'. The first sense is said to be the weak sense because of the possibility that someone may believe something to be the case, the state-of-affairs denoted by 'p' does, in fact, hold, with the consequence that the individual must then be said to know that p, even though he has no evidence for the belief.⁴ Hence, if one believed that there is a God or divine being, and there is in fact such a being (although we may have no evidence to support the belief), it would still be correct to say that one knows that there is a God. If, however, it were true that there is an eternal life with God such that in this life there would be something like the normal meaning of the term "evidence", this sense of the term "to know" would not allow any distinction between theistic beliefs held by some individual in the human and natural state, and those "beliefs" when appropriated in a non-natural state. In this case, simply believing the basic principles of the faith would be a case of knowing God. In order to avoid these dubious consequences, the stronger sense of the term requires evidence, not just the formulation, apprehension, and assertion of a proposition, for the justification of the claim to have knowledge.⁵

4 Cf. R.M. Chisholm, " 'Appear', 'Take' and 'Evident'", reprinted in Perceiving, Sensing and Knowing, ed. by Robert J. Swartz. (New York, 1965). p. 473ff.

5 Ockham seems to be aware of this distinction, but—the usual sense of the term is clearly the strong sense, whether the expression is applied to a knowledge of natural states-of-affairs or to theistic propositions.

With respect to the cognitive possibilities of theistic propositions it is Ockham's claim that natural man, or man in the present state, not only does not have any knowledge of God but in addition this individual cannot have any such knowledge. This sceptical conclusion is not, of course, unique to Ockham, but it was a striking, and for many a puzzling, thesis, given the philosophical and theological climate of his time. Ockham's view is that if the term 'God' is taken to refer to some being who is transcendent to, but distinct from, the natural order, and this being has the predicates normatively ascribed by the tradition of Christian theism, then it is impossible to know that this being exists, or even if this being should exist, that it possesses the assigned predicates.-- given the present powers of perception and conception. This negative thesis asserts that if the believer is asked to state the grounds or evidence which warrants the affirmation that there is a divine being, this believer must answer that there are no conclusive grounds or evidence for the empirical truth or falsity of the statement.

This negative conclusion, however, cannot be said to be obvious or self-evident. Many philosophers, and certainly many theologians, have asserted the precise contrary, namely that given the present powers of perception and conception it is quite possible to claim man does have knowledge -- and within certain strands of reflection -- a possible immediate acquaintance with the divine. The thesis, in fact, is so lacking in self-evidence that many would consider it an alternative to be

rejected with no further consideration, or to be accepted by those who no longer understand the significance of faith.

Since this negative thesis is a characteristic thesis of Ockhamism, it will therefore be necessary to examine the reasons which provide support for it. When stated in this capsule form a number of important essential distinctions are suppressed, along with the associated complex theories about the nature of mind, experience, abstraction, and so on. It includes a linking up of the logical and epistemic senses of the modal terms and only if these are separated out can the negative thesis be given an air of plausibility. For example, Ockham does not mean that under no circumstances could there be knowledge of God (and this entails some experience of the divine); such experience and knowledge is a general or logical possibility at least in the sense that it is not self-contradictory to assert this, but given the present natural order and the conditions of perception and conception any such immediate acquaintance is a natural impossibility. If this basic distinction cannot be maintained, it would hardly be necessary to proceed any further with this study for the simple reason that Ockham is committed to a flatly inconsistent position of asserting both that there is a possible knowledge of God and that no such knowledge is possible. The logical form of this negative thesis can be re-stated in such a way, however, that the appearance of an inconsistency is avoided. If it is assumed that the basic epistemic sense of the expression "p is possible" (where

p is an asserted proposition) is "it is possible, for all that S knows, that p", and 'to know' has the strict sense of 'knowing or having evidence', then for this statement can be substituted the expression "S does not know that p" (which is, of course, quite different from the claim "S knows that not-p").⁶ Similarly, for the expression "it is not possible, for all that S knows, that p" can be substituted the expression "S knows that not-p". With the strict sense of the term 'to know', Ockham's claim is that man in the natural order can only be said to know that there is some being transcendent to the natural order when there is some actual or possible immediate evidence to support the claim. Nevertheless, it is possible, for all that this individual may know, that there is such a being, which in turn means that the individual in the present order does not know that there is a God. But even this formulation of the negative thesis is not entirely satisfactory and does not allow the force which this principle has throughout Ockham's works. It may be that no decisive evidence for the existence of this being has occurred up to the present time -- ignoring for the moment the incarnation -- but this evidence may occur at some time in the future. The proposition is, then, a possible proposition but it would follow

6 These formulations have been taken from Jaakko Hintikka's Knowledge and Belief (Ithaca, N.Y., 1962). It is not assumed, however, that Hintikka's definitions and methods can be applied without restrictions to the Ockhamistic analysis of the epistemic situation, but they do provide a number of valuable suggestions for the interpretation and development of Ockham's statements. Ockham, in fact, includes a number of statements which are indefensible on Hintikka's principles.

that at some time in the future man will know, in the strict sense of the term and with immediate sensitive evidence, that there is a divine being, and this is a point which the negative principle denies. Furthermore, it is still possible that an inferential connection can be established between the phenomenal dimension and the sphere of divine activity, but that no one has yet discovered this relation. In order, then, to avoid these counter-theses, the Ockhamist negative thesis must be interpreted as a second-order type of statement about the nature and possibilities of natural knowledge, and the nature and existence of the divine. Hence, the force of this thesis is best expressed as, "it is not possible, for all that S knows, that S knows that there is a supreme transcendent being," (or, "it is not possible, for all that S knows, that it is possible, for all that S knows, that there is a supreme transcendent being.") It is this proposition which Ockham's theories must be capable of defending if the negative thesis is to be plausible at all, and whether this thesis is plausible or not depends, in turn, on the plausibility of the Ockhamist theories about the mind, meaning, and the nature of human knowledge.

A: The Nature of the Mind.

The most convenient point at which to begin an elaboration of the sceptical thesis is with the concept of 'mind'. As is the case for many other scholastic philosophers and theologians, the referent for descriptive epistemological theories is the

viator. This is primarily a theological term and refers to the individual who is "on his way" to another kind of existence. He is that being who is now limited by the conditions of the spatio-temporal order. Ockham states that the intellective soul of the viator is that which does not now have an immediate acquaintance (notitia intuitiva) with the divine. This immediate apprehension is possible (logically possible) in that it can occur in some other state, and so far as the viator is concerned, its occurrence is a future possibility. In the present state, or that which has been ordained by God in creation and which includes not only the entire universe but also the facts of revelation, such a cognition is beyond the capacities of the wayfarer. It is a "supernatural" possibility -- or, as will become clearer subsequently, a non-natural possibility -- and not a natural possibility. If such an immediate acquaintance should occur, it will be an occurrence for the beatus or one who has attained the state of eternal life with God. This immediate apprehension is an ordained possibility (by virtue of the deliverances of revelation and not by virtue of that which can be discovered by an inspection of the natural order) for the viator but not for the damnatus -- although by a special act of divine grace and mercy even the damned can attain to the beatific state. This is said to be a possibility in terms of the absolute power of God, in contrast with the ordained power which is manifested in the creation and in the occurrence of revelation, since there are said to be many things

which God could have done, but did not do, in creation.⁷

With respect to the animating principles, Ockham accepts the theory that there are in man two entities which can be called 'the intellective soul' and 'the sensitive soul'. That there are two such distinct entities cannot be demonstrated from self-evident propositions, nor can their existence be discovered by an examination of that which occurs as data in immediate conscious experience. It is possible, however, to give a number of "persuasive" arguments in support of this theory, and these arguments make it at least plausible to suppose that there exists in man a sensitive soul, which is distinct from the bodily form, and an intellective soul, which is distinct from both the sensitive soul and the forma corpor-eitatis.⁸ Of these parts, the intellective is denominated the immortal part, while the sensitive is that upon which natural or physical causes can act, is subject to productive of corruptive change, and which perishes with the dissolution of the body.⁹ This would appear to result in a clear body-mind dualism, but Ockham insists that man is not a dual being. His

7 IS: Prol., q. 1 C: Intellectus viatoris est ille qui non habet notitiam intuitivam deitatis sibi possibilem de potentia Dei ordinata. Per primum excluditur intellectus beatorum qui habent notitiam intuitivam deitatis. Per secundum excluditur intellectus damnatorum quibus talis notitia non est possibilis de potentia Dei ordinata, quamvis sit sibi possibilis de potentia absoluta.

8 Q: ii, 11.

9 Cf. IIS: q. 22, G,H.

claim is that it is possible to give sense and meaning to the expression 'man is one unified, personal, and individual being' such that there is only one total being which is a particular individual man.¹⁰

The intellective soul has a number of distinct expressions or functions. Two of the more essential of these are, first, the intuitive capacity by means of which the intellective principle is able to apprehend some existing thing, a pre-condition for the formation of the existential judgment that the thing "is" or "exists". It is by virtue of this intuitive capacity that the intellect is able to evidently (or with immediate evidence) know or apprehend the elements in the phenomenal order -- and provided that the ordinary standard conditions of perception hold, to form true or false judgements about the existing extra-mental things.¹¹ The second capacity of the intellective soul is its abstractive ability; this abstractive capacity can occur at two different levels with the first level that of abstracting from the existence or non-existence of the thing, such that there can be a consideration of the concept 'tree' in separation from the extension or denotation of the term, while the second

10 Q: II, 10, 11.

11 IS: Prol., q. 1, Z: Similiter notitia intuitiva est talis, quod quando aliqua cognoscuntur quorum unum inhaeret alteri, vel unum distat ab altero loco vel alio modo se habet ad alterum, statim virtute illius notitiae illarum rerum sciret si res inhaereret vel non inhaereret, si distet vel non distet, et sic de aliis veritatibus contingentibus, nisi ista notitia sit nimis remissa vel sit aliquod impedimentum.

level is that of distinguishing the similarities of a number of similar things, or coming to an awareness of that which is the element of similarity, and thereby deriving from these things one general notion applicable to the many entities from which the general concept has arisen.¹² In contrast with the intellectual soul, the sensitive soul is that which "conveys" data to the intellect, such that the ultimate origin of knowledge is the extra-mental thing, while the basis for either abstractive or intuitive cognition is the presentation of this thing in sensuous perception.

When described in terms of capacity and function, the distinction between the intellectual and the sensitive souls is reasonably clear. Within the circle of intellectual functions, however, a number of additional powers can be discriminated, and among these are assent and apprehension. These are distinct mental acts, but while assent may occur as a result of both intellectual and volitional acts (formation of a proposition and the assent to its truth or falsity), it is strictly a capacity of the intellectual soul operating at the level of concepts. Apprehension, which presupposes intuitive cognition, may be either the apprehension of such-and-such a sensible quality (apprehendere in particulari) or the apprehension of the concept of this

12 Idem: Aliter accipitur cognitio abstractiva secundum quod abstrahit ab existentia et non existentia et ab aliis conditionibus quae contingenter accident rei vel praedicatur de re. ... potest accipi ... uno modo quod sit respectu alicuius abstracti a multis singularibus.

same quality,¹³ (or apprehendere in universali). Sensation, a product of the sensitive soul, provides the means whereby there can be any cognition or acquaintance with the extra-mental object. When perception occurs, this extra-mental thing can be said to be "re-presented" through the specific qualities which appear in the phenomenal experience.¹⁵ But the occurrence of this sensitive perception is not sufficient to cause the judgment that the collection of qualities represents some contingently existing extra-mental reality -- although the occurrence of sensitive qualities is a necessary condition for the formation of this judgment. The existential judgment, however, cannot occur until there has been the formation of a proposition, or complexum, the terms of which denote the material object. In effect, this means that the intellective soul, or principle, acts upon the material given through the sensitive soul, and since knowledge is superior to sensation, the intellective capacity itself is superior to the sensitive.¹⁴

Not only must there be intuitive cognition of that which does, or can, exist, and which can be given in the sensuous manifold if the intellect is to have knowledge of particulars,

13 L. Baudry, Lexique Philosophique de Guillaume d'Ockham (Paris, 1958) p. 26.

14 IS: Prol. q. 1, and numerous other passages.

15 Q: IV; 3: Repraesentare est esse illud quo aliquid cognoscitur, sicut cognitione aliquid cognoscitur. Alio modo accipitur repraesentare pro illo quo aliquid aliud cognoscitur sicut imago repraesentat illud cuius est imago. Tertio modo accipitur repraesentare pro aliquo causante cognitionem, sicut obiectum causat cognitionem. (Baudry, p. 234).

but that which is known first in the ordo cognoscendi is itself the individual and singular. Ockham has a number of arguments to support the theories that intuitive cognition is necessary and that the first object in knowledge is the individual; one of the more important of these is based on an analysis of the conditions which need to hold if the intellect is to assent to the contingent proposition "this thing is ...". Assent requires the formation of a proposition, and the formation of a proposition requires terms; if the written or spoken words of the linguistic expression are meaningful then there must be concepts and concepts can only arise when there has been some sensuous experience. Hence, assent to the contingent proposition "this thing is ..." must have an intuitive cognition of the sensible particulars or such assent would be impossible.¹⁶ Among the several arguments for the primacy of the individual or singular in the order of knowledge, two of the more important are, first, that the extra-mental thing is apprehended by intuitive cognition, and intuitive sensuous cognition is an apprehension which is properly individual and simple, since all real extra-mental beings are singulars. Secondly, any abstractive knowledge at either the first or second level of abstraction presupposes individuals

16 IS: Dist. II, q. 7F. IS: Dist. III, q. 5N. IS: Dist. III, q. 6. Q: I, 15 ... quia intellectus noster cognoscit evidenter propositionem primam contingentem de sensibilibus; ergo habet notitiam incomplexam sufficienter ad causandum istam notitiam complexam evidenter A quasi "transcendental deduction" is also possible; the evidential fact of clear and distinct concepts which have been derived from the experientiable order presupposes determinate extra-mental objects.

from which either type of abstraction has occurred.¹⁷

Despite the occurrence of passages which might seem to indicate the contrary, Ockham is neither a naive realist -- who would claim that the common and public objects as perceived are the real objects -- nor a sceptical idealist -- or one who asserts that all objects as perceived or known are ideal in character. Epistemologically, he is a type of representative realist with intimations of critical idealism. Sensitive data are but a partial cause of assent to categorical statements, and because sensitive functions are a partial cause of knowledge, it cannot be said that intellective acts are the total cause.¹⁸ Similarly, if an intellective act occurs, it follows that there must now be a sensitive act present, or there must have been a sensitive act, representations of which have been stored in the memory (recordative cognition).¹⁹

The intellective and sensitive souls have two distinctly functions, but they have, nevertheless, the same form. For

17 Q: I, 13.

18 Q: I, 15; ... dico quod visio sensitiva est causa partialis visionis intellectivae, sed non est causa partialis actus assentiendi sine visione intellectiva, quia notitia complexa praesupponit notitiam incomplexam in eodem subiecto.

19 IS: Prol., q. 9L: ... quando notitia similitudinis causat notitiam illius, cuius est similitudo, illa non est causa sufficiens cum intellectu, sed necessario requiritur notitia habitualis illius, cuius est similitudo. Unde si aliquis videret statuam Herculis et nullam notitiam penitus haberet de Hercule, non plus per hoc cogitaret de Hercule quam de Achille; sed quia prius novit Herculem et remanet in eo notitia habitualis Herculis, ideo, quando postea videt similitudinem suam, virtute illius notitiae habitualis et istius visionis similitudinis ducitur in actum rememorandi de Hercule et non in notitiam primam ipsius Herculis.

example, one of the capacities of the sensitive soul is that of vision, but the intellective soul may also be said to have a capacity for vision. The distinction is roughly that which holds between "seeing" and "seeing that", or between "being aware of something in the visual field" and "being aware that there is an X in the visual field." The sensitive data of vision may then be an item within consciousness and material for the intellective operations. Ockham gives an argument to support this distinction and to support the use of the expression 'intellective vision' -- although the argument is at best persuasive rather than demonstrative. From experience it is evident that a young child has the capacity for sensitive vision, but it is not until later and perhaps only when the rational capacities have been developed that the child can come to understand through the use of reason that there is an intellective soul which has the capacities of intellective vision.²⁰

Both the intellective and sensitive souls have different functions, even though the form of these functions shows similarities common to both. But it is clear from experience that in addition to intellective acts, there are volitional acts, and

20 Q: I, 15; Ad argumentum in oppositum dico tenendo animam sensitivam esse eandem formam cum intellectiva, non est dicendum quod visio sensitiva recipitur in animam intellectiva, sed recipitur in corpore vel in anima distincta ab anima intellectiva in corpore ... Ad aliud dico quod est differentia inter visionem sensitivam et intellectivam, quae innotescit nobis partim per rationem, partim per experientiam. Per experientiam, quia puer videt per visionem sensitivam et non intellectualem; quia non intelligit per rationem quia anima separata potest habere visionem intellectivam non sensitivam.

that not only does the sensitive soul have a function of sensing things, but as result of the sensitive principle desire is an element within conscious experience. It is not the case, however, that the terms "intellect" and "will" indicate or denote two independent and really distinct elements. The rational soul may be said to have the distinguishable activities of thought and will, but these are alternative ways in which the intellectual soul manifests its powers. Ockham's view is that intellect (intellectus) is the soul understanding or thinking, while the will (voluntas) is the same animating principle expressing itself through the act of volition. In the Ockhamist terminology, intellectus is a connotative term signifying the rational soul directly and connoting the act of understanding indirectly.²¹ Similarly, voluntas is a connotative term again signifying the rational soul but connoting the act or capacity of will. With respect to the sensitive soul, similar considerations apply: not only does the sensitive soul express itself through its powers of sensation, but it also has the capacity for desire (delectatio, etc.), and as is the case with the intellectual, these are alternative ways in which the sensitive soul can manifest its powers. One may have an (intellectual) intuitive cognition of feelings and desires (or other inner states) and from this a propositional object expressing that which is felt, desired, or to be sought after, can be formed.

²¹ Summa Logica, I, cap. 10. (abbreviated in the following as SL).

This propositional object must be present for there to be a volitional act, since it is not possible for the will to proceed towards some act unless the intellect provides the rule and direction. Sensitive cognition alone is not enough to cause a volitional act.²² But as is evident from experience, it is possible for one to desire an object, a product of the sensitive faculty, yet pursuit of this object may be denied by the intellect and hence a volitional act is prohibited. This is a clear case of opposition, and the possibility of opposition indicates both the non-identity of will and desire and the possibility of a real distinction between the two.²³

22 Q: I, 15; ... sicut voluntas non potest in actum suum nisi praecedat cognitio in intellectu, quantumcumque sit notitia intuitiva in sensu.

23 Q: II, 10, 11; In the occurrence of judgment and assent, there are instances where Ockham can be interpreted as meaning that intellection and volition coincide. These cases are the first and third types of the following classification of propositions: (1) per se nota, or those known when the meanings of the terms are known; (2) contingent, or those which can only be known when verified by an appeal to something other than the meanings of the terms; (3) conclusions derived from true propositions in accordance with the rules of valid inference; (4) probable propositions, or those which appear to be true to many, or the most wise, and (5) propositions expressing the articles of faith. It is not possible by an act of will to dissent from the first and the third, while dissent is a possibility for the other types. For these two types it could be said that the will is constrained by the intellect, or, since will and intellect are alternative functions of the intellect, there is a coincidence of the two. This is to be contrasted with the fifth type: ... quicumque scit evidenter aliquod complexum non potest dissentire illi complexo solo imperio voluntatis, sed oportet quod persuadeat per rationem fortius moventem intellectum suum ad dissentiendum vel oportet quod obliscatur alicuius evidenter noti, sed theologus quantumcumque studuerit in theologia solo imperio voluntatis potest dissentire credibilibus, etiam sine ratione fortius movente, quia nulla ratio ex falsis potest fortius movere quod ratio ex veris evidenter notis ... (IS: Prol., q.7H).

The capacities of the intellective and the sensitive souls can be said to circumscribe the cognitive, perceptual, volitional, and passional possibilities open to the viator. Semantically, these terms may also be said to define the scope and limits of human existence. The effectiveness of Ockham's critique of his predecessors hinges on the conviction that appeal to the immediately evident facts of the intellective operations or to the sensitive data is not only sufficient to resolve all puzzles and perplexities, but that there is no other recourse open for the resolution of such difficulties. While this is a characteristic empiricistic thesis, it is, however, a modified empiricism which includes a number of "metaphysical" theses about the nature of the mind and includes a strong rationalistic tendency. These rationalistic tendencies will become more evident with an examination of the Ockhamist theory of signification.

B: The Theory of Meaning.

Among the several intellective functions perhaps the most basic is the sign-using capacity. Ockham distinguishes between two senses of the term 'sign': in the most comprehensive sense of the term, a sign is anything which makes something else known, or causes something else to become an item in conscious experience. If some item in perceptual or conscious experience functions in this manner, then that which is made known is that which is called a secondary element of cognition (or immediate acquaintance) and not a primary element -- that is, an element

which arises from memory and not an immediate sensuous datum, although memories are dependent upon a prior sensitive experience. The sign, in this sense, is an instrument in the revival of a memory, or "making known that which was habitually known."²⁴ Hence, a sound is said to signify an instrument or a person and it is recognized as that which has been produced by an instrument or person. The "idea" of the relevant material object or being is brought to mind or brought to consciousness. In the same way an effect can be called the sign of its cause. These signs are said to be instances of natural signs and cases of natural (or "by nature") signification, since the sign is a natural fact or element rather than a conventionally instituted symbol. Under this description of 'sign', images, visual, tactual, or other sense-data, sensible objects, and perhaps almost any discernible item in immediate experience can become a sign, provided only that it makes some other recordative or memory item known.

For the present purposes, the second, and more restricted sense of the term 'sign' is of greater importance. In this sense, a sign is that which makes something else come to the attention of the sign-user or interpreter, but that which

24 SL: I, cap. 1: "Signum" dupliciter accipitur: uno modo pro omni illo quod apprehensum aliquid aliud in cognitionem facit venire, quamvis non facit mentem venire in primam cognitionem eius, ... sed in actualem post habitualement eiusdem. Et sic vox naturaliter significat, sicut quilibet effectus significat saltem suam causam, sicut etiam circulum significat vinum in taberna....

functions as a sign must be capable of standing for the thing, or other item, denoted by the sign. This sense of the term applies only to linguistic tokens and their correlative mental concepts, but Ockham should not be interpreted as claiming that the two senses are mutually exclusive; the class of linguistic tokens is a sub-class of signs-in-general, with a smaller extension than the unrestricted sense of 'sign'.²⁵

In accordance with the more or less traditional analysis of signification, Ockham distinguishes three components of discourse. These are the written or spoken linguistic tokens and the mental terms, but these elements do not comprise the contents of three logically and factually distinct languages. The written component, of course, is that which is or can be seen and which utilizes conventionally agreed upon visible marks; the spoken, similarly, is that which is or can be heard. Both of these elements, however, are subordinated to, or are meaningful in terms of, the associated mental terms or concepts. These concepts can be said to comprise a "mental language" -- although this is somewhat misleading and the term is not found in Ockham -- or alternatively, a "natural language of concepts", since these concepts are derived from experience

25 Idem: Aliter accipitur "signum" pro illo, quod aliquid facit in cognitionem venire et natum est pro illo supponere vel tali addi in propositione, cuiusmodi sunt syncategoremata et verba et illae partes orationis, quae finitam significationem non habent, vel quod natum est componi ex talibus, cuiusmodi est oratio. Et sic accipiendo hoc vocabulum 'signum' vox nullius est signum naturale.

and a concurrence with the natural order, and are, therefore, natural entities in a sense.²⁶ Ultimately, according to the Ockhamist type of analysis, all public languages are languages only because there is a mental component and not because there happens to be use of linguistic tokens in conformity with public conventions or rules. In this case, any conventionally instituted language is dependent upon meanings-in-the-mind for whatever meaning the distinct items have, and not conversely. The answer to the question: what is the meaning of a sign (which, when considered by itself is a lifeless entity)? for Ockham is quite straightforward; this is an instance of

26 This concept of a "natural, mental, language" creates a number of difficulties when an attempt is made to discuss it in the context of twentieth century philosophy. Ockham did not invent the notion, and it can be traced back at least as far as St. Augustine. Ockham, in fact, refers to the discussion of the "Word" in De Trinitate (XV, 19) with considerable approval. But within the context of contemporary philosophy the crucial problem, it might be argued, is to show how it can make any sense at all to speak of a mental language. Following the suggestions and arguments of Wittgenstein (Philosophical Investigations, I, 243-280) it might be argued that such a language must be a private language, and there can be no such entity as a radically private language; any language is such only because there is a public set of rules governing the use of language tokens or expressions. The content of this putative language is the private experience of some individual and therefore this private experience cannot constitute a language. Indeed, those who are prepared to accept the behaviourist analysis would go further and argue that there is really no possible sense to be given to the notion of "private experience". Either there are publicly observable criteria or symptoms or there is no sense to be given to the expressions.

The behaviourist program may be laudable insofar as it attempts to avoid methodological solipsism or solipsism simpliciter, but it is as implausible in its consequences as radical solipsism. But as the current debate over the status of mind and other minds shows clearly, there is little agreement over the proposal that intellect is a function of social conventions only -- as Wittgenstein's analysis would seem to indicate.

attention only to the written or spoken token. The meaning is the intelligent use of these tokens; the meaning is something which individuals add to the material sign-vehicle through the efficacy of intellectual functions. Reference to a mental language can then be taken to mean that if there is to be intelligent use of public tokens then there must be an understanding of that which the tokens signify (or mean).²⁷ On this analysis of meaning "the mental language of concepts" is composed of meanings-in-the-mind which can be expressed by the use of conventionally instituted visible marks or sounds, but it does not need to be so expressed. The common element linking the language-users together is not the agreement to use the public token in specific ways -- although there is certainly this public agreement -- but the possibility that men have similar types of experience which give rise to common concepts.²⁸

27 P. Boehner, Collected Articles on Ockham, p. 220.

28 On Ockham's analysis, thought, intellection, or understanding is not to be identified with the capacity to use some specific conventionally instituted language. To do so is to divest these terms of any real significance. If the point of view of behaviourism is adopted, then only the observable fact that some person speak or write in accordance with something vaguely called "standard usage" can be admitted. Thought and intelligence would then seem to be merely a function of conventionally established forms of speech, and it is extremely difficult to see how it could possibly be something in addition to the capacity to use some language.

Ockham's use of the term 'concept' is a technical expression which attempts to avoid the two extremes of radical conventionalism or self-defeating solipsism. The latter is avoided by the postulate of extra-mental objects and the link between concepts and experience provided by the understanding itself, and by the insistence that individual thought and experience are primary and basic to any public language. The former of these extremes was, it seems, adopted by Robert Holkot in his account of

The relation between this mental or natural language and the public written or spoken language is a rough parallel with the conventional grammatical distinctions. Ockham was prepared to admit that every part of speech has a mental correlate; not only nouns and adjectives, but verbs, prepositions, conjunctions, adverbs, cases and number all have a mental correlate.²⁹ The terms in the written, spoken, and mental components are said to signify, but they do so in different ways. The traditional theory of signification asserted that the written word signifies, or refers

intellective acts. Holkot himself claimed to be an Ockhamist, but he differed from Ockham in that he held the view that a reduction of mentalistic expressions to the written or spoken was possible. Hence, for Holkot, the expression, "the concept of (X)" can be understood as a short-hand abbreviation for the corresponding written or spoken expression (for example, for the expression, "the concept of 'tree'" can be substituted simply 'tree'). The "concept of (X)" may always be taken to designate some peculiar entity in the soul, but the verification of such statements is difficult, if not impossible. In this case, all language referring to mental acts is translatable without remainder into the objective written or spoken language, with the result that all language about "mental language" or "concepts", or any language which includes mentalistic expressions, becomes completely empty of any significance. This is clearly a case of radical nominalism, but it is not a nominalism which is found in Ockham. (Cf. E.A. Moody, "Quodlibetal Question of Robert Holkot O.P.; on the Objects of Knowledge and of Belief," Speculum, 39, p. 53ff.)

²⁹ SL: I, cap. 3. Cf. P. Geach, Mental Acts, p. 102ff. Geach argues that Ockham uncritically took the model of the written and spoken latin language as a model for the conceptual, and supposed that the grammatical features of the former (or at least some of them) when applied to the conceptual, makes it possible to use the conceptual to explain the features of the conventional language. The second part of the criticism may have some justification. It should be noted, however, that while all parts of speech may have a mental correlate, the mental language is not identical in scope with the written or spoken. Hence, IS: Dist. XXII, q. 1st ... mentis conceptum aliquando vocatur omne cognitum ab intellectu, isto modo omnis pars orationis significat mentis conceptum..., where this is clear.

to, the spoken word (or alternatively, the written word may be said to signify the spoken word and the concept), and the spoken word signifies the mental entity or concept. The concept in turn refers to that from which it has been derived, such that the ordering of signification (reference) of the written word is to the spoken, then to the concept, and then to the thing. Following Scotus, Ockham adopts the revised ordering, utilizing the notion of personal supposition; in accordance with this revision both the written, spoken, and the mental concepts can signify (or refer to) the objective things directly without the intermediary of one or the other types of language-component. This revised ordering of signification is of considerable importance both historically and for Ockham's analysis of the signification of the central theistic terms. On the traditional program of signification, it could be claimed that a written or spoken term has a signification or reference only if a concept could be identified which in turn would require the identification of some element in the empirical order which gave rise to this concept. Determination of evidence for the divine is, therefore, essential. On the revised signification, signifying is not something which is passively present in the meaning-complex or meaning-situation, but is the result of using signs in a certain way, namely that of intending a reference to some thing or state-of-affairs.

The concepts which comprise the mental language function, then, as necessary conditions for meaningful and significant

communication and are, therefore, the basic component in the Ockhamist theory of meaning. Synonyms for these meanings-in-the-mind are 'mental terms', 'notes or passions of the soul', 'intentions', or 'acts of understanding'. They may also be denominated 'psychic entities' and singular things which are instances of the category of quality, these qualities inhering in the soul in much the same way that whiteness may be said to inhere in a white wall.³⁰ Passively, 'concept', and its synonyms connote a mental capacity; actively, the connotation is that of a mental act, or act of the understanding, which is the grasping of the meaning of a term or phrase. However, these senses of the term and their synonyms are common to many other scholastics and are not distinctively Ockhamist. For the distinctive element one must turn to the concept of "intention", for in the Ockhamist analysis of meaning, it is this element which is primary, and the element which permits Ockham to make a clear distinction between the meaning of an expression and its reference. From these intentions mental propositions are formed, and the existence of these mental propositions is a necessary condition for communication.³¹ Boethius had called these mental

30 Boehner, Collected Articles, p. 215. As Boehner notes, there is a possibility of a predication paradox; it will be possible to predicate some qualities of that which does the predicating, namely the intellect itself. This can be avoided by the use of the distinction between first and second order intentions (discussed below).

31 Q: III, 11; ... ergo ad istam quaestionem quod tunc propositio vocalis est vera quando ex eius prolatione auditor est natus concipere et formare propositionem mentalem veram.

entities 'intellections', and it is Ockham's view that the point of this expression was to draw attention to the intellectual element in propositions. In any case, Boethius should not be understood as implying that mental propositions are composed from something called "intellective beings", which might be thought to be a kind of material element for these propositions. The only intellective beings are intellective souls. Rather, these intellections are to be regarded as signs, mental in nature, which signify and stand for something else.³²

There are, however, a number of descriptions of concepts ranging from the claim that they are nothing but generalized mental images to the claim (extreme nominalism) that they are merely a specific unit of conventionally instituted discourse. In his earlier works, Ockham seems to have opted for the former, or fictum theory, but at no point did he adopt the view of extreme nominalism, adopting rather the theory which

32 SL: I, cap. 12; Est autem sciendum, quod intentio animae vocatur quoddam in anima natum significare aliud. Unde, sicut dictum est prius ad modum quo scriptura est secundarium signum respectu vocum, quia inter omnia signa ad placitum instituta voces obtinent principatum, ita voces secundaria signa sunt illorum, quorum intentiones animae sunt signa primaria... Illud autem existens in anima, quod est signum rei, ex quo propositio mentalis componitur ad modum, quo propositio vocalis componitur ex vocibus... Et Boethius in commento super Perihermenias vocat intellectum. Unde vult, quod propositio mentalis componitur ex intellectibus, non quidem ex intellectibus qui sunt realiter animae intellectivae, sed ex intellectibus, qui sunt quaedam signa in anima significantia alia, et ex quibus propositio mentalis componitur. Unde quandocumque aliquis profert propositionem vocalem, prius format interius unam propositionem mentalem, quae nullius idiomatis est ...

might be called 'realistic conceptualism'.³³ In the Summa, one of the later works, he gives a summary of the different alternative theories which might be adopted: first, it might be argued that this mental sign or entity is nothing but a fictum, a product of the sensitive imagination and a kind of pale copy of the sensuously perceived thing. Derivation of this copy is a work of the abstractive process, and the fictum may be said to have an objective existence, that is, as an object "before the mind". The second alternative might be to consider the concept as a quality with a subjective existence in the soul, but in the sense that this quality is distinct from the act of understanding itself (actus intelligendi). Since the term 'intellect' is a connotative term signifying the intellective soul and connoting the act of understanding, this theory about the concept would imply that this mental entity is an accidental attribute of the intellective soul. The third view, which Ockham himself supports, is that the concept or sign is the act of understanding itself.³⁴ His argument for this view appeals to the principle of economy: everything which can be explained by the first and second theories can be equally well explained by the third and, in addition, it is clear that the act of understanding is common to all of the

33 Cf. IS: Dist. II, q. 8^F for the fictum theory.

34 SL: I, cap. 12: Aliqui dicunt, quod non est nisi quoddam fictum per animam. Alii, quod est quaedam qualitas subiective existens in anima distincta ab actu intelligendi. Alii dicunt, quod est actus intelligendi. ... Igitur praeter actum intelligendi non opertet aliquid aliud ponere.

theories. It is therefore necessary to ask why the concept need be said to have either independent objective existence or accidental but dependent subjective existence. It would appear, then, that for the term 'concept' the term 'act of understanding' can be substituted.³⁵ In fact, Ockham states the stronger thesis: the meaning of the term 'act of understanding' can coincide with, and include the meaning of the term 'concept' (potest competere actui intelligendi) -- although it does not follow that the properties of the act understanding are only those which signs have. The concept, or intention in the soul is, then, to be understood as something in the soul -- namely the capacity of the intellectual soul to express itself in the act of understanding -- which has the capacity to signify something else (intentio animae vocatur quoddam in anima natum significare aliud). If this identification can be said to hold, then the act of understanding itself will have the essential nature of signs.

In many respects, this is an extraordinary suggestion with a number of extremely interesting and fruitful consequences. It is unfortunate that Ockham does not give a further elaboration of this thesis, despite the evident use of this notion in his theory of meaning and signification. But although there is

35 Idem: Et pro istis est ratio ista, quia frustra fit per plura, quod potest fieri per pauciora. Omnia autem, quae salvantur ponendo aliquid distinctum ab actu intelligendi, possunt salvari sine tali distincto, eo quod supponere pro alio et significare aliud ita potest competere actui intelligendi sicut alii signo.

this deficiency, it is possible to give a more detailed account of this theory by bringing together some of the other things Ockham has to say about signs and the nature of the understanding. Because of the importance of this suggestion for theistic propositions, it will be necessary to do this. Ockham's suggestion that the mental name, concept, or intention is of the same nature as the act of understanding will depend on whether or not the conditions which hold for concepts and signs can also be applied to the act of understanding, since the intention is itself something in the soul which has the capacity to signify something else.

It will be defensible to claim that the meaning of the expression 'act of understanding' includes the meaning of the expression 'sign' if it can be shown that, (1) the act of understanding itself -- in some of its complexity -- stands for something else.³⁶ This will require asserting that the act of understanding has the same type of "existence" which those items in conscious experience interpreted as signs may be said to have. (2) It must then be shown that, like signs, the act of understanding is the partial cause leading to a cognition of something else. (3) Since a characteristic of a sign is that it is a sign of something for someone, a description must be given of what, and for what (or whom) the act of understanding

³⁶ The weaker claim is adopted here. Ockham seems to make the stronger claim that the act of understanding is synonymous with that of a sign, and while this claim seems defensible, its demonstration is not necessary for this study.

is a sign.

From the many scattered comments which Ockham makes on the subject, it is clear that the act of understanding is a singular, particular, mental act of one specific conscious individual. Understanding is not identical with knowing something, but it is a prior condition which must hold if there is to be knowledge. Knowledge requires the apprehension of a proposition and the affirmation that the proposition is true. But in the context of knowledge, that which is first apprehended is the proposition, and a proposition is composed of terms. If, then, the act of understanding is itself to be interpreted as a sign, it must have properties analogous to the properties which terms have in propositions. Hence, the act of understanding must be capable of not only providing something like the referential property which signs-in-general have, but it must also be capable of acting as a substitute for the object -- that is, representing it, ^{or} or standing for it.

The context in which Ockham states what he means by the term 'concept' is also that in which he defines the term 'intention'. There are two logically distinct types of intentions, namely first and second intentions. 'First intention' has a broad and a narrow sense: in the broad sense, any sign whatsoever which has the status of a mental reality and which does not signify other intentions or signs may be called a first intention; in the strict sense, only those signs which have the property of being a mental name and which stand for

that which they signify are first intentions. Second intentions, similarly, are distinguished in terms of a narrow and a broad sense: the latter sense allows a signification of all first intentions and all signs which have been established by convention; the former, or narrow sense, restrict second intentions to mental names which signify first intentional mental names.³⁷ In this case, a second intention (and first order intentions as well) can be said to have an "ideal existence"; they may also be called noemata (to use a phenomenological designation) or intentional objects, of which a partial cause of their "intentional existence" is noesis or intellection. At the level of first intentions, any datum of consciousness -- with perhaps the exception of that which is clearly a memory datum -- may obtain the status of a intention, if this datum can be said to have lost its characteristic of being a mere datum in consciousness and has gained the characteristic of being a representation of something else, namely another object (or element in consciousness).

It has been indicated that with respect to any first order first intentional terms there must be an intuitive cognition of

37 SL: I, 12: Tale autem signum duplex est. Unum quod est signum alicuius rei, quae non est tale signum, sive significet tale signum simul cum hoc sive non, et illud vocatur intentio prima, ... Large dicitur "intentio prima" omne signum intentionale existens in anima, quod non significat intentiones vel praecise signa... Stricte autem vocatur "intentio prima" nomen mentale natum pro suo significato supponere.

Intentio autem secundum est illa, quae est signum talium intentionum primarum, cuiusmodi sunt tales intentiones "genus", "species", et huiusmodi ... Potest etiam dici, quod "intentio secunda" potest accipi stricte pro intentione, quae significat praecise primas intentiones, vel large pro intentione, quae significat intentiones et signa ad placitum instituta, si tamen sit aliqua talis.

those things denoted by the terms -- if these terms are to have any "sense meaning".³⁸ Repeated intuitive cognition of the similar things makes possible the derivation of a general concept (at the second level of abstraction). Whether interpreted as a fictum or as an act of understanding itself, this general concept is not nothing at all, whatever its nature may be. But these more or less general terms are not only derived from the experienceable particulars, they signify or refer to these particulars. The reference, however, is to the real things, or things said to be external to the mind. But that extra-mental or real objects are signified by the general concept cannot be explained by a description of the abstracted general concept or the process of abstraction itself. The general concepts have been derived from sensible particulars, and in this case the only things which the general concept could possibly signify would be these sensible particulars. Yet when a proposition is formed, the reference is not to the "thing-as-seen" or "thing-as -heard", but the real extra-mental thing; that is, the general name has an additional attribute, namely a categorical or assertoric quality which is not accountable in terms of either its present phenomenal status or its origin. Therefore, signification of singular things indicates the presence of something else, and this additional element is an objective reference conferred by the act of understanding.

38 A term borrowed from C.I. Lewis; vide An Analysis of Knowledge and Valuation (La Salle, Illinois, 1946).

The first condition for the identification of the act of understanding with that of a sign can therefore be readily met when the act of understanding is considered as a condition for knowledge of real objects. The objects which exist independently of conscious experience can only be known by an apprehension of sensible things and abstraction from these. The derived concept, with the intellective act which provides the categorical and referential quality, may then be said to represent the real object.³⁹ Once there has been the formation of the concept and the construction of a proposition there may then be an existential judgment; this propositional entity then becomes the "ideal" analogue of the extra-mental reality. Taken in a comprehensive sense, the act of understanding becomes a substitute for the extra-mental singular and the object as perceived, conceived, remembered and known stands in the place of the real objective thing. Hence, under this description, the act of understanding includes the first condition for the occurrence of a sign.

The second condition for the identification requires that the intellective act be a partial cause for the cognition of something else. In this case, it must be plausible to claim that this act is a partial cause in the epistemic situation, making something else come to consciousness. The clearest case is, again, the conditions for knowledge of a real object. Ockham revises the dictum that there is nothing understood by the

39 Cf. supra, note 15, with the senses of repraesentare.

intellect which was not previously in the senses; this principle, he claims, should be understood in the more explicit form that no extra-mental thing is understood by the intellect unless that thing has been represented through sensation to the intellect.⁴⁰ Knowledge of the material object requires sensuous data; indeed, nothing can be understood in the present state without the occurrence of prior sensitive imagination, which in turn presupposes sensitive intuitive cognition.⁴¹ It has been indicated, further, that sensitive experience is but a partial cause of understanding, while the act of understanding is itself a partial cause. But one of the functions of the act of understanding is to convert the sensuous data from being merely sensuous data to assertoric representations of extra-mental objects. In this sense, the act of understanding can be said to have one of the properties of sign-in-general, namely that of bringing something else to consciousness, although -- and in this respect the act of understanding must be said to differ from other signs -- that which is brought to consciousness is not some item in recordative cognition.

The third condition demands a determination of what, and for what or for whom the act of understanding can be said to be

40 IS: Prol., q. I, UU: Ad aliam auctoritatem de sensu et sensato dico, quod non est de intentione philosophi, quod nihil intelligitur ad intellectum nisi praefuit prius in sensu, sed quod nullum sensibile extrinsecum intelligitur ab intellectu nisi praefuit sub sensu.

41 Ibid: Dico quod nihil intelligere est sine fantasmate, quia omnis cognitio intellectiva praesupponit necessario pro statu isto ymaginationem sensitivam, tam sensus exterioris quam interioris.

a sign, since signs are signs because some material item has a significative quality of something for someone. The first of these requests has been met; the act of understanding in the cognitive context and with the conceptual determinations has the function of a substitute for the object. The second request, however, raises a number of difficulties for Ockham's proposal. A partial answer to this question can be given by using the distinction between first and second intentions, or, although the terms lack the requisite precision, between the actus rectus and the actus reflexus. Ockham does not use the terminology, but he does admit that in an imprecise manner of speaking it could be said that the direct act is that by means of which one understands, intends, and refers to an extra-mental object, while the reflex act is that by means of which direct acts are understood, intended, or to which reference is made.⁴² In this way, the direct act or first intention may be said to be signs for the reflex act or second intention. Hence, the acts of understanding are the first level objects for the second order acts of understanding. A partial answer to the question, then, can be that which utilizes these distinctions: first order acts of understanding may be the sign-vehicles for the second order acts

⁴² Q: II, 12; ... dico quod non accipitur hic actus rectus et reflexus proprie, quia illud dicitur proprie reflexum quod incipit ab eodem et terminatur in idem. Et ideo proprie nullus actus dicitur reflexus. Sed ista accipitur improprie, quia vocatur actus rectus quo intelligit intellectus obiectum extra animam, et actus reflexus quod intelligitur iste actus rectus.

of understanding. It is true, of course, that there is a common element to both levels of understanding, namely the intellectual function of referring, but this provides no better grounds for an objection than the observation that conventional languages all use some sensible token or another. But a possible difficulty does arise when the question is asked, for what, or for whom, are second intentions signs? This seems then to indicate the possibility of an infinite regress. On the basis of the practical necessities of explanation -- in contrast with the theoretic considerations -- this possibility of an infinite regress need not be a serious problem, however. It is an evidential fact that the human mind has the capacities for both the formation of concepts and for the formation of concepts of concepts, but whether third or fourth order concepts are required depends upon the logical and factual demands placed on the explanatory theory. If it is the case that there are no factual or logical reasons for the introduction of these higher order intentions, then the principle of economy can be used to rule out any such terms on the basis that the terms have no significance.

I should want to claim, therefore, that it is plausible to argue for an identification between the act of understanding and the meaning of 'sign', and that, further, this identification makes it possible to avoid certain difficulties which seem to arise from the Ockhamist analysis of concepts. One of the more serious difficulties which this analysis appears to create is that, while Ockham has a theory of abstraction and a theory of

general terms, it is not clear that these concepts have any important value for future experience. There is a partially justifiable tendency to consider the Ockhamist epistemology as a narrow interpretation of Aristotle where the form of Aristotle's theory about the cognitive powers of man has been preserved but much of the richness and subtlety has been lost. The picture, then, becomes man-as-knower only, and while there is certainly an active and passive character in knowing, the active functions refer only to the development and formation of concepts. It is difficult to see what possible significance these developed concepts can have for the determination of human action or further intuitive cognition. Ockham, however, makes the suggestion that the act of understanding itself have the nature of a sign. This claim, given the meaning of the term 'sign' and Ockham's somewhat scattered comments on the act of understanding itself, make it at least plausible to carry out this identification. But if this claim is plausible then it is possible to argue that the former interpretation of Ockham must be revised. The interpretation which I should like to propose, then, is this: Ockham's analysis of concept-formation cannot be viewed as an instance of simplicistic terminism. Concepts are not just static entities derived from a concourse of the mind with sensuous experience, and the functioning of the intellect is not merely that of determining a general concept by the process of abstraction. If the function of abstraction were only to produce a generalized image or fictum, it can still be claimed that the concepts so

derived do have some relation with particulars -- or at least the particulars from which this concept has been derived -- but such a theory of the concept gives no account of why this concept might have a relation to future singulars, or in what way the derived concept might have any importance so far as these future singulars are concerned. It is of no help to argue that the fictum incorporates the similarities which hold among the singulars, so that in this way there should be a reference to future entities having elements of similarity. This only succeeds in making the difficulties that much more complex. The fictum is something like a generalized picture and it is therefore very unclear how this entity could possibly signify any specific particular. Similar considerations hold for the theory that the concept has subjective existence but that it is still of such a nature that it is an accidental attribute of the soul, for here, again, the tendency is to view the act of understanding in such a way that it is separable from either concepts or particulars.

I should want to argue, however, that Ockham's third suggestion avoids all of these difficulties. To consider the act of understanding as a sign involves a determination of conceptual structures -- a result of mind in relation to experience -- a referential element for which the intellectual act is a necessary condition, and a determination of future particulars. The derivation and determination of meanings is a complex act which can also be described as a process of "coming to

consciousness" or the "development of conscious awareness", or, although this is clearly not an Ockhamist term, the "development of structures of consciousness".⁴³ The "something in the soul, which is apt to signify something else" (quoddam in anima natum significare aliud), is not an entity separable and distinct from the intellective soul. It is the intellective soul in one of its manifestations or modes of expression, in this case with a conceptual determination. But then the act of understanding becomes, on this interpretation, a conceptual a priori; experiencing, knowing, meaning, thought and intellect are to be viewed as dynamic and organic processes in which concepts are not only derived from experience, but can be said to make possible the anticipation and determination of experience. In the terms of reference of modern philosophy, it is much closer to the facts to claim Ockham as the intellectual precursor to Kant than to Hume. Similarly, Ockham's empiricism must be called a modified empiricism; it is an empiricism modified by the metaphysical thesis that there is at least one element in knowledge which is not determined by experience, namely the intellect itself.

43 Q: I, 13; Ad tertium dico, quod videndo aliquid habeo aliquam cognitionem abstractivam propriam; sed illa non erit simplex, sed composita ex simplicibus. Et ista notitia composita est principium recordationis, quia per hoc recordor de Sorte, quia vidi eum sic figuratum, coloratum, talis longitudinis et talis latitudinis et in tali loco, et per illud compositum recordor me vidisse Sortem. Sed circumscribas omnes conceptus simplices praeter unum, non plus recordaris de Sorte per illum quam de alio homine sibi simillimo; bene possum recordari me vidisse, sed utrum sit Sortes vel Plato, nescio.

In Chapter III it will be argued that Ockham's notion of a composed concept functioning as a conceptual a priori makes possible the claim that theistic terms have a semantic content.

C: Knowledge and Belief.

Shortly after Ockham completed his logical and epistemological works, a debate arose over the proper objects of knowledge and belief (objecti credendi vel sciendi). The central issue was whether these proper objects are the real things themselves or propositions (mental entities, or, in the more extreme nominalistic treatment, conventionally instituted linguistic expressions).⁴⁴ A number of participants in this debate appealed to Ockham as their authority for the claim that the proper object is the proposition, and from the foregoing comments it is not difficult to see why this could be the case. That to which the mind attain in apprehension is not the res or extra-mental thing as such, but either percepts or concepts. In this context, the terminus in apprehension must be either sensitive or intellective apprehension or cognition.

The term 'cognition' is, however, extremely ambiguous. Two of the more general and comprehensive senses of this term are indicated by the expressions cognoscere and scire. Thus, Ockham notes that "to know" (scire) may be understood in a broad sense or in a more restricted sense. Broadly speaking, "to know" (cognoscere) involves the notion of an immediate acquaintance, or apprehension of something, as a part of conscious experience. That which is known, in this sense,

44 Cf. S. Elie, Le Complex Signifiable.

may be propositions, terms (incomplexa), necessities, contingencies, possible, impossibles, truths, falsehoods, and in general any object discernible as a result of intuitive or abstractive cognition. In the strict sense, however, "to know" requires not only the apprehension of something, but the justifiable predication of 'true' or 'false' of a proposition (cognoscere verum).⁴⁵ Consequently, the scope of the term cognoscere is considerably broader than that of the expression cognoscere verum.

In the Commentary on the Sentences Ockham makes it quite explicit that the object of knowledge, in the strict sense of "to know", is the proposition, and it is the proposition which is known and not extra-mental things. This applies to any scientific knowledge whatsoever, whether the science is real (empirical science) or rational (the propositions and terms of logic).⁴⁶ But the strict sense of "to know" requires the predication of truth or falsity. Ockham's discussion of this factor, however, is in terms of evidence, and justification of the claim

45 IS: Dist. XXXIX, q. 1B: Sciendum est quod scire dupliciter accipitur ad praesens, scilicet large et stricte; primo modo scire est idem quod cognoscere, secundum quod cognoscere commune est omnia, et isto modo Deus scit, hoc est cognoscit, scilicet complexa et incomplexa, necessaria et contingencia, vera et falsa, possibile et impossibile. Stricte scire idem est quod cognoscere verum.

46 IS: Dist. II, q. 4M: Sciendum quod scientia quaelibet, sive sit realis sive sit rationalis, est tantum de propositionibus tanquam de illis quae sciuntur, quia sole propositiones sciuntur. ... quia omnes termini illarum propositionum sunt tantum conceptus et non sunt ipsae substantiae extra, quia tamen termini aliquarum propositionem stant et supponunt personaliter, scilicet pro ipsis rebus extra.

to have propositional knowledge depends on the type of proposition and the presence (or lack of it) of the evidence appropriate to that type of proposition. The classification of propositions, in fact, is determined in large measure by the type of evidence. Ordinarily, the term 'evidence' means, roughly, "empirical evidence", "facts", or "states-of-affairs" which are taken to verify the statement. While this sense of 'evidence' is clearly present in Ockham's analysis,⁴⁷ his use of the term is somewhat more comprehensive, for, first, evidence includes not only linguistic facts but non-linguistic facts, and secondly, evidence is primarily a property of terms and only secondarily a property of propositions. Hence, a cognition or item of knowledge is said to be evident when it is caused, or brought about, by any one of the following circumstances: (1) when it is caused by a grasp of the propositional terms alone; (2) or by the meanings of the propositional terms of some other but logically related proposition -- for example, when there is a grasp or apprehension of the meanings of an expression in a definition; or (3) by what can be called empirical evidence,

⁴⁷ L. Baudry, Op. cit., p. 290. It is true that Ockham is prepared to admit that truth is a passio of being, but he also makes it clear that this notion is vague. Even in this sense, truth is predicable of being because the latter means "that which is intelligible." Hence, it is not necessary to take truth as an absolute term, since it is properly a member of the class of connotative terms, and designates being while connoting some intellectual capacity (Cf. Boehner, Op. cit., p. 232ff.). Successive stages of precision force the reduction of the sense of the term to "that which is a true or false proposition." That which is signified by these terms then is some proposition, while there is a connotation of a thing or state-of-affairs.

or when the significance of the terms has been grasped directly by intuitive or abstractive cognition. The "analytically necessary" or per se nota propositions are said to have one type of evidence, namely that which arises from the ordering of the meanings themselves. These propositions form the limited but very important class of scientific propositions. The third type, those for which the evidence is direct immediate intuitive cognition form the much larger class of contingent propositions.⁴⁸

It is clear that there is a close relation between "evidence" and "truth", but it would not be quite correct to say that all evident propositions are true propositions -- although the converse can be said to hold. Ockham is explicit with respect to that sense of "true" which would ordinarily be called 'empirical truth': a proposition is true, and hence evident, if that which is stated or expressed by the proposition is, in fact, the case, or the state-of-affairs denoted by the proposition does hold, with the converse for the attribution of

48 IS: Prol., q. 1D: Notitia evidens est notitia alicuius veri complexi ex notitia terminorum incomplexa immediate vel mediate nata sufficienter causari, ita scilicet quod quando notitia incomplexa aliquorum terminorum, sive sint termini illius propositionis, sive alterius, sive diversarum propositionum, in quocumque intellectu habente talem notitiam sufficienter causat vel est nata causare mediate vel immediate notitiam talis complexi, tunc illud complexum evidenter cognoscitur, Ex isto sequitur quod notitia evidens est in plus quam scientia intellectus vel sapientia, quia propositio aliqua contingens potest evidenter cognosci, et tamen talis notitia non est scientia, nec intellectus, nec aliquis istorum habituum quod ponit philosophi in vi Ethicorum.

falsity.⁴⁹ There is a difficulty, however, with what is usually called "analytic" or "logical" truth. This refers to that kind of truth, the logically necessary, which arises from either the ordering of meanings or from the ordering of propositions themselves (that is, the logical relations determined by implication, conjunction, alternation, etc.,). But while there is no detailed discussion of this sense of 'true', it is reasonably clear that the concept is implicit in the theory of per se nota propositions and the theory of consequences. With respect to the contingent propositions, some of these may be said to have the quality of evidence or to be evidently known, and those which have this property are those of which there is immediate intuitive cognition of the terms. Some contingent propositions cannot be said to have this property, however, and these are the propositions the terms of which have been apprehended at the first or second level of abstraction. In order for these propositions to be evidently known there must be an intuitive cognition which will allow the predication of 'true' or 'false' of the proposition. One might, for example, clearly understand the meaning of the term 'white' and understand by the term 'Socrates' such concepts as "teacher of Plato", "gadfly of Athens", etc., and still not know whether

49 Q: VI, 29: Veritas et falsitas propositionis ... sunt conceptus relativi significantes ipsas propositiones, non absolute, sed iste conceptus: veritas ultra propositionum quam significat connotat quod ita sit in re sicut importatur per propositionem. Et falsitas importat quod non sit ita in re sicut importatur per propositionem. (Baudry, p. 292).

Q: VI, 5: A veritatem propositionis affirmativae non requiritur nisi ydentitas rei significatae per subiectum et praedicatum. Et hoc sufficit ad eius veritatem. (Baudry, idem).

the proposition composed from these terms, "Socrates is white," is, in fact, true.⁵⁰

These contingent propositions known at the first or second level of abstraction and lacking in immediate evidence can, however, be classified as possible propositions. In Ockham's analysis, the term 'possible' takes several senses, with at least two of these derived from Aristotle: (1) that which is in act can be said to be possible (implying the rule ab esse ad posse valet consequentia); (2) that which does not now exist, but which can exist, or that which is not now, but will be, can be said to be possible; an alternative description of this sense is given as "that which is neither necessary nor impossible; and (3) that which is not impossible. The third sense is an alternative definition of 'possible' namely the not-necessarily-not, while the second sense is synonymous with the usual definition of contingency.⁵¹ Since the definitions of 'necessary' and 'possible' are identical with those now commonly given, the standard symbols of modal logic can be substituted for them. Hence, the second sense, that which is both possibly the case and possibly not the

50 IS: Prol., q. 1D; Dicendum, quod propositio per se nota est illa quae scitur evidenter ex quaecumque notitia terminorum istius propositionis, sive abstractivae sive intuitivae. Sed de propositione contingenti hoc non est possibile, quia aliqua notitia terminorum sufficit ad causandum notitiam evidentem veritatis contingentis, scilicet intuitivae, sicut postea patebit. Aliquando autem non sufficit, scilicet abstractivae. Unde si aliquis videat Sortem et albedinem existentem in Sorte, potest evidenter scire quod Sortes est albus. Si autem tamen cognoscit Sortem et albedinem existentem in Sorte abstractivae sicut potest aliquis ymaginari in absentia eorum, non sciret evidenter quod Sortes esset albus, et ideo non est propositio per se nota.

51 L. Baudry, Op. cit., p. 56.

case, has the formulation $(\sim \Box p \rightarrow \sim \Box \sim p)$, while the third sense has that of $(\sim \Box \sim p)$ or $(\Diamond p)$. If, in general, a proposition is of such a nature that it is lacking in evidence (that is, neither a per se nota proposition with semantic evidence, nor a proposition verified by immediate intuitive cognition) and is not self-contradictory then it may be called a 'possible proposition' -- in the most general sense of 'logically possible'. These possible propositions, then, are those of which it is not known at the present time whether they are true or false (although it can be said that they are either true or false.)⁵²

As is the case with the proper object of knowledge, the proper object of belief is always a proposition. To believe something to be the case requires first the apprehension of meanings or mental terms and then the composition of these into mental propositions. In this respect, there is no difference between the object of knowledge and the object of belief, since the identically same proposition (whether justifiably or not) can be known, believed, doubted, revealed, probable, necessary, and so on for a considerable number of propositional predicates. These predicates are predicates of propositions and are, therefore, second-order, second-intentional, terms or descriptions. The conditions, then, which will need to hold for the assertion of the complex proposition "Chimaeras are four-footed" is an impossible

52 It is reasonably clear that Ockham did not leave open the possibility of constructing a three, or multi-valued, logic. For a careful examination of this point, see, P. Boehner, ed., Tractatus de Praedestinatione.

(mythical, possibly true, believable, etc.,) proposition,' are quite different from the conditions for the use of the component proposition "Chimaeras are four-footed." This distinction is of considerable importance for it represents perhaps as close as these scholastic distinctions allow one to come to the distinction between "belief that such-and-such" and one sense of the expression "believing in such-and-such". "Belief in" might be said to occur at the level of the apprehension and formation of a proposition. Hence, "belief in God" will not be possible at all unless there has been at least the appropriation of some semantic structures. Concepts and propositions are necessary for there to be any belief-like activity at all, and only if some mental elements of meaning are present can there be the higher order "belief that" type of statement.

The differences between knowledge and belief arise from the conditions and claims which must be interposed to justify the claim to knowledge in contrast with belief. "Belief" is a considerably more comprehensive term than "know"; justification of the claim "to know that such-and-such" requires evidence and evidential propositions while the use of the expression "to believe that such-and-such" is appropriate even though the proposition is a contingent or possible proposition. Hence, it can be said that knowledge entails belief but not conversely, although when a proposition is assented to without evidence, such that it can only be said to be believed, if it should become an evidential proposition, it can then be said to be known, or to become an

item of knowledge.⁵³

The credibilia which are of concern for the present study are the propositions of theology and the articles of faith. Not all theological propositions of theology are belief-statements or contingent propositions; a few can be said to be knowable insofar as they are demonstrable.⁵⁴ A statement of such a nature would be, "God is good", because "all being is good" and "God is a being". In this case there is a middle term, 'being', which makes the syllogism possible, a condition lacking for nearly all other attempted demonstration of the attributes of the divine. This, however, is an extremely restricted sense of the term "to know", since it is only that sense which is concerned with the knowledge of conclusions given the premises. But those credibilia which are not of this nature -- by far the largest number -- are possible propositions. Since a proposition can be an item for belief even if it cannot have the conditions for evidence in the present state, at least some theistic propositions can be said to be possible propositions, provided only that there is the logical possibility of evidence. If this condition cannot be met then it would have to be admitted that the relevant statements of the faith are impossible propositions epistemically. But then since epistemic possibility entails the logically possible, the stronger conclusion follows, namely that if the evidential conditions do not hold at all, all theistic statements are impossible.

53 Cf. SL: III, i, cap. 30.

54 IS: Prol., q. 2DD.

D: Knowledge of God and Natural Theology.

If it is assumed, for the sake of the argument, that a divine being does exist, and given the acceptance of the basic principles and theses of empiricism, the central question must arise: how can this existence and nature of this being be known? This general question, of course, is also crucial to any natural theology even though the structure of the questions (and hence the relevant answers) is not distinctly empiricistic. But the form of the general question which is central to the present study is, given Ockham's description of mind, meaning, and knowledge, what can possibly be known about the nature and existence of a divine being. Ockham is extremely explicit and straightforward in his answer to this question: throughout his theological works he insists over and over, with a frequency which can leave no doubt about the matter, that natural knowledge of God as an existing subject is not a possibility open to the viator.⁵⁵

In most of the instances where these statements occur, the text either uses the expression non potest habere or has the force of

55 A few of the many possible examples: (IS: Dist. II, q. 9P) Circa quod ostendum est primo quod Deus non potest cognosci in se, ita quod ipsamet divina essentia terminet immediate actum intelligendi nullo alio concurrente in ratione obiecti. (Idem, O) Omnis res cognita in se aut cognoscitur intuitive aut abstractive, ergo si essentia divina in se cognoscitur, aut cognoscitur a nobis intuitive, aut abstractive. Non intuitive patet, quia illa est beatifica, quae ex puris naturalibus non est possibilis nobis. Nec abstractive in se a nobis ex puris naturalibus nisi ipsa cognoscatur intuitive. (IS: Dist. III, q. 1) Secundo dico quod Deus non est primum cognitum a nobis, nec primitate generationis, nec adaequationis, sed si cognoscatur, vel cognoscitur in se, vel cognitione propria sibi vel aequivalenti, vel in aliquo conceptu, sed Deus non cognoscitur primo a nobis in se pro statu isto. (Also: Ibid. q. 1E; q. 2E; Q: IV, 18, and Q: V, 7).

this locution, rather than the weaker non habet or non cognoscitur. The supposed natural knowledge is an impossibility, although just what kind of an impossibility this is remains to be determined.

Ockham's analysis of mind, meaning, and knowledge, allows for only four possible routes of access to the divine: (1) this being might be known directly as an item or object in sensible experience in much the same manner that other sensible objects are known; or (2) the being may be knowable as a result of the abstractive process such that this knowledge may be said to be mediated by sensuous experience, but is not precisely reducible to sensuous experience; or (3) the intellect and reason may be said to have the capacity of transcending the limitations of sensuous experience -- circumventing all empirical modes of apprehension -- to obtain a non-natural apprehension of eternal truth; or (4) the intellect and reason has the capacity of both demonstrating the existence of the divine as well as demonstrating the necessary essentiality of certain attributes. The Ockhamist analysis, however, rules out all of these modes of access and does so basically for the reason that the traditional Christian theistic conception of God makes any such knowledge of God a conceptual impossibility.

Factually and historically, there is no immediately evident and a priori reason why some being or natural state-of-affairs should not be taken to be God, or to be divine. Primitive religions illustrate the very wide variety of entities and objects which may be given divine status. Consequently, for at least some primitive religions, it is always possible to have an experience of the divine

as an item in ordinary experience, and in the Ockhamistic terminology, given one of these primitive concepts of 'God', evident cognition of the divine would be a possibility pro statu isto. This possibility of evident cognition is not open for a believer in the Western theistic tradition, however, since the divine is said to have the properties of being infinite, omnipotent, etc. When these descriptions of God are adopted, it is impossible to imagine what it would be like to experience such a being, or, in terms of the description which Ockham uses, what it would be like to have an acquaintance with a being whose essence and nature was that of pure act, pure spirit, absolutely perfect (illud quo nihil est melius et perfectius),⁵⁶ and intensively infinite (infinite in terms of degree or perfection rather than numerically or extensively infinite). This is not to deny, of course, that natural events, processes, or states-of-affairs may be said to manifest divine activity, but it does require the denial that any natural object or event is unequivocally the work of some one specific divine being.

Ockham has a number of arguments against the view that God can be known in the present state through the functioning of the natural cognitive processes. Of these, perhaps the most forceful turns on the consideration that if such a knowledge were possible, unbelief would be a historical and factual accident. If God is potentially knowable in the present state, then it will be always possible to have an intellectual or sensitive intuitive cognition

56 Q: I,1.

of this being. This cognition, however, would be of the same logical type as, for example, the cognition or apprehension of whiteness. It would therefore be theoretically impossible for anyone to deny the existence of this being, although practical difficulties may stand in the way of an intuitive acquaintance. Anyone who professed to be an unbeliever had yet to learn to recognize and appreciate the divine. Consequently, the conversion of the unbeliever to a believer could be achieved by natural means, with the further consequence that such a conversion has the characteristics of compulsion and lacks the free choice of faith.⁵⁷ Ockham's epistemic and semantic principles rule out any such consequence, when these are conjoined to the traditional theistic concept of God. From the fore-going discussion of knowledge and belief, it is clear that if the divine is to be known, this being must be evidently known. Evident cognition, in all cases, must have an element of intellective or sensitive intuitive cognition. If the intuitive element is data provided by intellective intuitive cognition, this must be either the apprehension of meanings, or meaning structures, or

57 Q: IV, 18: Tunc arguo sic, quia tu concedis cognitionem Dei propriam causari ante compositionem et divisionem, et non ex fide, quia in fide concordamus et tamen non ponimus hoc, ergo evidenter cognoscit quod cognitio Dei propria causatur per sensationem, et per consequens evidens est cuilibet infideli Deum esse per hoc quod videt albedinem esse, quia posset evidenter arguere quod conceptus causatus mediante sensatione non est alicuius impossibilis sed possibilis, ex quo mediante sensatione albedinis pro re cognitio sit propria Dei ante compositionem, et ista cognitio non est alicuius impossibilis, ergo quilibet infidelis posset evidenter scire Deus est possibilis. Et cum in perpetuis non differat esse a posse, potest quilibet infidelis evidenter scire Deum esse, quod falsum est.

the apprehension of inner mental states, such as the feelings of joy, sadness, or happiness, or the apprehension of the operations of reason. None of these, of course, are identical with the divine (although there is no immediately evident reason why some of these might not be said to be caused by divine activity -- and hence the possibility of infused faith). If, however, the intuitive element is the data of immediate sensitive cognition, then the occurrence or presentation of this divine being in human experience must conform to the limitations of all sensitive experience, so that if God is known as an existing subject in these terms this being would necessarily be a finite, sensible, spatio-temporally located being. But this sensitive intuitive cognition implies that this being will have properties similar to, and ascribable to, other sensible beings and objects. If such an acquaintance should occur, however, there is an immediate, direct, opposition to the initial description of God as infinite, pure act, pure spirit, etc. Hence, while some concept or other is necessary for there to be intelligibility and any discourse at all, and some concepts of the divine may imply the possibility of an intuitive cognition, the more or less traditional concept of God which Ockham employs makes any such immediate acquaintance a conceptual impossibility.

Ockham is prepared to admit that if one could have an intuitive apprehension of God in the present state then it would be possible for one to have a concept, or concepts, of God which are simple, proper, and essentially predicable of this being.

Abstractive cognition would, therefore, be a possibility. But any abstractive cognition presupposes some intuitive cognition, and since there is no intuitive cognition of the divine possible in the present state, there can be no abstracted concepts proper to God.⁵⁸ Furthermore, even if some abstracted concepts of the divine were possible these must always be both determined by sensuous experience and retain some of the elements of that from which they have been derived. Hence, any such concept, if possible at all, would have a natural component which constitutes a part of its semantic content. In this case, the inroads of pantheism is an imminent possibility.

The first two possible routes of access to knowledge of the divine are, therefore, inadmissible. But for similar and related reasons the third alternative must be ruled out. It cannot be argued that the intellect or intellective soul has the capacity of transcending the limitations of conscious experience and of reaching out to the eternal. Ockham does not deny that the intellective soul has the capacity for a direct acquaintance with the divine; but what he would deny is that in the present state it is impossible to imagine what this experience would be like.

⁵⁸ In this respect, the following text is important: Et si dicatur de Deo quod scimus quod est et tamen nescimus quid est, dicendum est quod nullam propositionem mentalem in qua subiicitur terminus omnino simplex et mere absolutus conveniens Deo vel supponens pro Deo possumus pro statu isto habere; possemus enim scire de eo quid est, si sciremus si est. (SL: III, ii, cap. 25. From L. Baudry, "Raison et Foi selon Occam", Archives d'Histoire et Littéraire du Moyen Age., 1962.)

Only when the intellective principle has been determined by an intuitive presentation can the intellective act of understanding occur. But in the present state, a grasp or apprehension of the eternal, and therefore the divine, must be ruled out because if these could be objects for immediate cognition, they are objects of an entirely different logical type from anything denominated "the natural".⁵⁹

If the reason forbidding an intuitive cognition of the divine in the present state is because of the concept of God common to this tradition of Christian theism, then for this and similar reasons there cannot be a demonstration of the existence or attribute of a supposed divine being. Ockham is just as explicit with respect to a possible proof for the existence of God as he is with respect to a possible immediate intuitive cognition of the divine in the present state. A large number of possible attempts to prove the existence of God are dealt with, and his criticisms are extremely incisive. His most comprehensive statement of the impossibility of such a proof occurs in his answer to the question, can the viator obtain some simple and proper concepts of God after there has been the formation of a proposition -- that is, through the powers of reason operating on propositions? The answer to this question is unequivocally

59 Cf. IIIS: q. 8: Unde non obstante quod tanta sit distinctio inter sapientiam creaturae et sapientiam Dei sicut inter Deum et lapidem nec sunt plus eiusdem rationis ex parte una quam alia, tamen a sapientia creaturae potest abstrahi conceptus communis, a lapide non.

negative.⁶⁰ All discourse, and in particular reasoning, can only be among terms and propositions. But all that reasoning can produce is a development of that which is "implicit" in the terms and propositions themselves. To state this in somewhat more imprecise terms, it is impossible to get more out of the propositions than the terms themselves contain (or to provide an exemplification of the logical relations in addition to the semantic content of the terms). But propositions are composed from terms in accordance with certain specific logical structures. Incomplexa, however, must have some intuitive cognition as their base. Since incomplexa must have this base, there cannot be a proof for the existence of God through the operations on propositions unless at some point intuitive cognition has produced a simple and proper concept of God which can lead to a justification of the factual claim of existence. The contingent proposition "God exists" (or "God is omnipotent" -- which is true only if there is in fact some divine being who has this property), like the contingent statement "Socrates exists" (or "Socrates is white" -- which is true only if there is some being denoted by the subject term and who has the predicate ascribed), is a factual claim, and this factual element must arise from an

60 Q: IV, 18: Secundo dico quod viator non potest talem conceptum simplicem et propriam habere post compositionem et diffinitionem. Cuius ratio est, quia discursus proprie est inter complexa, ergo, per discursum solum solum potest acquiri notitia complexa, et non incomplexa, quae praesupponitur compositioni et divisioni, ergo, etc.

For a detailed examination of the proofs for the existence of God, see L. Baudry, "Raison et Foi selon Occam," Archives d'Histoire Doctrinale et Litteraires du Moyen Age, 1962.

intuitive cognition and not from the logical operations alone.

This is Ockham's general conclusion, but there are a number of texts which can be said to either weaken this general conclusion or provide clear evidence that Ockham is inconsistent. On two different occasions Ockham gives what appear to be proofs for the existence of God, and on at least two other occasions he states that the expression Deus est is absolutely necessary.⁶¹ Since he admits the modal rule a necesse esse ad esse valet consequentia it would appear that Ockham has committed himself to some form of the ontological argument. In this case, the existence of God can be said to be a logically derivable truth, rather than a contingent truth or contingent proposition. But at other points Ockham also insists that the expression is not a self-evident per se nota proposition, such that it can be denied without self-contradiction. This statement, then, is at best a contingent proposition. If Ockham is, in fact, affirming both of these views then he has committed himself to an explicit contradiction.

The first two of these counter-texts can be easily dealt with; the third objection will require a somewhat more detailed examination. Ockham dismisses all of the arguments which purport to prove the existence of God from causality, motion, or finality. It may be possible to establish that the world has a (or some) cause, but there is no reason to suppose that this cause must be the God of the Christian faith. Similar considerations apply to

61 SL: III, ii, cap. 5. Q:VI, q. 2.

the manifestior via and any attempt to determine one specific end for which the parts of the universe are ordered.⁶² Ockham does, however, give something like a proof from efficient causality, except that the central concept is that of "conserving cause". If one can argue that when a thing comes into being it must be preserved in its being as long as it exists, then it is possible to argue that there cannot be an infinite hierarchy of actual conserving causes. This argument, Ockham thinks, avoids some of the difficulties which arise from efficient causality. But while it may be possible to argue to the necessity of an actual conserver, this proof is merely said to be more "reasonable" in that some of the difficulties are avoided, intrinsic to the other proofs. There is no more reason to suppose that this first conserving cause is the God of the Christian faith than there is with the standard proofs from causality or finality.

For similar reasons the proof given in the first Quodlibet cannot be construed as having any more value. There Ockham argues that if God is understood by means of the description "something which is more noble and more perfect than any other being" (aliquid nobilius et melius omni alio a se) it cannot be proven that there is only one God and the reason given is that no evident cognition is possible for this being. But if the description of God is given as "that than which no being is more noble and perfect" (illud quo nihil est melius) then it is possible to prove the existence of this being on the grounds that otherwise

62 Q: III, 1; Q: VII, 22-23; Q: IV, 2.

a regress to an actual infinite is a possibility.⁶³ But although this may be demonstrated, Ockham makes it clear that one cannot prove that there is only one such being. It is also clear that a great deal more than this is required if the concept of "God" is to coincide with the essentials of the Christian faith.

The third objection, however, is somewhat more difficult. Prima facie, Ockham is flatly inconsistent, and he does not give an explicit account of how this inconsistency is to be avoided. But it is possible to develop an interpretation in terms of which the inconsistency can be shown to be merely apparent. The interpretation which I should like to suggest depends upon Ockham's acuteness as a logician, and upon the consideration that an anticipation of many recent developments in modal logic can be discovered throughout his works. Attention to the relevant texts and a use of these modal distinctions, I shall argue, will show that the attribution of inconsistency is incorrect.

Ockham distinguishes between the "necessary" (necessarium), absolute necessity (necessitas absoluta), and hypothetical or conditional necessity (necessitas ex suppositione). The necessary is described as that which perpetually exists, is incorruptible,

63 Q: I, 1: Circa primum dico quod hoc nomen 'Deus' potest habere diversas descriptiones. Una est, quod Deus est aliquid nobilius et melius omni alio a se. Alia descriptio est, quod Deus est illud quo nihil est melius et perfectius.

Circa secundum dico, quod accipiendo 'Deum' secundum primam descriptionem non potest demonstrative probari, quod tantum est unus Deus. Cuius ratio est, quia non potest evidenter sciri, quod Deus est, sic accipiendo Deum; ergo non potest evidenter sciri, quod est tantum unus Deus.... Sciendum tamen, quod potest demonstrari Deum esse, accipiendo 'Deum' secundo modo prius dicto; quia aliter esset processus in infinitum nisi esset aliquid in entibus quo non est aliquid prius nec perfectius.

and cannot cease to exist in any way. The necessary simpliciter, in this context then is a concept which expresses the notion that the being exists in such a way that it could not be other than it is.⁶⁴ But this definition of the necessary must be interpreted as a definite description since there is only one being said to have these properties, namely God. All other beings, including the Angels, are of such a nature that they may go out of existence or must be said to have come into existence. Hence, this necessity is a property of a being, and is the property of having necessary existence. Absolute necessity, in contrast with the necessary, is a property of propositions rather than terms, and a proposition is said to be absolutely necessary when the assertion of the contradictory is explicitly self-contradictory. In terms of this sense of 'necessity', the expression Deus est is said to be absolutely necessary since the affirmation of the contradictory is self-contradictory.⁶⁵ It would not be correct to say, of course, that every concept of God is self-contradictory, but if the attributes "perpetual", "eternal", "incorruptible", etc., can

64 SL: III, ii, cap. 5: Uno modo dicitur aliquid necessarium, perpetuum et incorruptibile quia per nullam potentiam potest incipere vel desinere esse. Et sic Deus est perpetuus, necessarius, et immortalis. Aliquando dicitur necessarium, perpetuum et incorruptibile propositio quae, si formatur, non potest esse falsa, sed vera tantum.

65 Q: VI, 2: Necessitas absoluta est quando aliquid est simpliciter necessarium ita quod eius oppositum esse verum includit contradictionem... Et sic haec est absolute necessaria, homo est risibilis, Deus est, quia contradictio est quod haec sint falsae et contradictoriae, verae.

Cf. Norman Malcolm, "Anselm's Ontological Arguments", The Philosophical Review, Vol. LXIX (1960).

be ascribed to God, then the assertion that this being may not exist, when it has the property of necessary existence, is self-contradictory. Hypothetical or conditional necessity occurs when certain specific logical relations hold between propositions. These logical relations may be determined by the rules for conditional argument or by the meanings of the propositional terms.⁶⁶ An example which Ockham uses is illuminating: "if Peter is predestined then Peter will be saved." Assuming that "predestination" means here "predestination to salvation" and not the contrary, the truth of the hypothetical can be determined by an inspection of the terms which comprise the antecedent and consequent along with the rules for entailment. The difference between absolute and hypothetical necessity is a difference between a concept (or concepts in a categorical propositional matrix) and the propositional expression of this concept in combination with other propositions.

With these distinctions Ockham can easily avoid the accusation of inconsistency with respect to the expression Deus est, and it is possible for him to claim both that the expression is absolutely necessary and that it is not self-evidently true. The expression is absolutely necessary given a specific description of God. In terms of this description it would lead to a self-

66 Ibid: *Necessitas ex suppositione est quando aliqua conditionalis est necessaria quamvis tamen antecedens et consequens sit contingens sicut haec est necessaria, si Petrus est praedestinat, Petrus salvabitur et tamen tam antecedens quam consequens est contingens, vel quando aliqua talis consequentia est necessaria tunc dicitur necessitas ex suppositione.*

contradiction to claim a grasp of this meaning of the term and still to assert that this being could possibly not exist. This level of analysis applies only to terms, however, and not to propositions. The appropriate propositional formulation requires the distinction between categorical and conditional statements. Hence, a propositional statement of the assertion that God necessarily exists must take the form, "if there is a being denoted by the term 'God', and this being has the predicates 'eternal', 'incorruptible', 'immortal', etc., then this being has the property of 'necessary existence'." By considerably over-simplifying, this is roughly equivalent to the conditional "if p then necessarily p" (where p stands for the statement, "a divine being exists").⁶⁷ This proposition is not a logical truth, however, since there may be a divine being which lacks the predicate of 'immortality'; nor is it self-contradictory to assert that there may be a divine being who does not necessarily exist. The proposition can, therefore, be said to be logically contingent and hence a logically possible proposition. But it includes a distinction between concepts, the referent of these concepts, and the properties which these concepts obtain when included in certain types of propositions, and the question still

67 The terms 'immortal' etc., are predicates and not, at least at this point, properties of propositions. A more detailed analysis would be required to show that a transition from necessary predicates ($F \Box x$, "x is necessarily an F") to necessary propositions ($\Box Fx$, "x is an F is necessary") can be carried out. This distinction in the scholastic treatment of the modalities is represented by the use of the modes in sensu diviso and in sensu composito respectively.

remains, is there an extra-mentally existing being who possesses the assigned predicates. A consequence of this line of analysis, then, is that it makes perfectly good sense to assert the statement, "it is possible, for all that one knows, that there is a necessarily existing being". By assigning the usual modal symbols (with '□' standing for 'necessary' or 'it is necessary that', and '◇' for 'it is possible that') this statement then becomes an expression of second-order modalities, or specifically, ◇ □ p.⁶⁸ Ockham can, therefore, quite readily admit that Deus est is absolutely necessary when the reference is to the content and structure of the concept, while still maintaining that some propositions formed from this concept are not per se nota and self-evident since this is a move to second-order modal forms. In the latter case the question is whether the proposition is evidential or has evidential status -- a question which cannot be determined by an inspection of the meanings of the terms alone.

It now appears, however, that Ockham has so over-stated his case that complete scepticism with respect to theistic claims must be the alternative. It is not possible for the viator to

68 It has been argued by Norman Malcolm (Op. cit.) that the conditional proposition "If God exists then he necessarily exists" is self-contradictory. His objection is applied to Kant, but it will evidently apply to Ockham, if it is defensible. His claim is "Can anything be clearer than that the conjunction 'God necessarily exists but it is possible that he does not exist' is self-contradictory? Is it not just as plainly self-contradictory as the conjunction 'A square necessarily has four sides but it is possible for a square not to have four sides?'" The objection only has force if the distinction between levels of modality is omitted or ignored. I have sketched an interpretation of second-order modalities which gives justification to the claim that higher-order modalities do not collapse into assertoric statements, a thesis essential to Malcolm's case. (Cf. A.N. Prior, Formal Logic, p. 198ff)

have any simple concepts proper to God, in the present state, and it is impossible to demonstrate the existence of this being. In this case, it is a conceptual impossibility for anyone in the present state to have knowledge of God by either acquaintance or by description, and it follows that the viator has very strong grounds for asserting the statement, "it is not possible, for all that he knows, that he knows God", or in terms of the alternative formulation stated at the beginning of this chapter, the viator can claim that he cannot know God.⁶⁹ If this is taken to mean, "under no circumstances whatsoever can the viator know God", then Ockham has not only ruled out all natural theology and natural knowledge of God, but he has apparently made knowledge of God a logical impossibility -- which has the consequence that any claim that theistic statements have some cognitive and informative worth must be dismissed as groundless. But this conclusion is incorrect; Ockham has protected himself from the thesis of Stratonician scepticism,⁷⁰ and he does so by the adoption of the traditional principles of the absolute and ordained power of God (de potentia Dei absoluta and de potentia Dei ordinata). These principles are, properly speaking, theological maxims, but as I shall argue, they have considerable philosophical import. The absolute power of God is described as

69 By a simple transposition of the rule ab esse ad posse valet consequentia the principle "no impossibility can be a factual occurrence" is easily obtained. The viator can then affirm the assertoric statement that he does not have knowledge of God.

70 Cf. Antony Flew, God and Philosophy (London, 1966), p. 69.

the capacity to accomplish whatever does not involve a contradiction. The actual employment of this capacity in creation requires a selection from the general realm of possibilities. The created world is then the actual artefact and by the use of the modal rule ab esse ad posse valet consequentia the actual order has its correlative range of real, or conditioned, possibilities.⁷¹

It is reasonably clear, however, that since there can be no natural knowledge of God and no way in which a concept of God could be determined in the present state, the two principles of the absolute and ordained power of God present a number of problems for interpretation. The negative thesis does not allow the claim that the central term 'God' has any distinctively proper semantic content. If the term 'potentia' is to be attributed to God, therefore, it must mean something different from what it means when attributed to natural beings and entities. I should like to suggest, however, that the sense of this term in attribution to God is very nearly equivalent to the meanings of the term possibile. Under this interpretation the sense and meaning of the two principles is purely formal, while their function is that of determining the structure and content of

71 SL: III, iv, cap. 6: Haec distinctio... est sic intelligenda quod posse Deum aliquid quandoque accipitur secundum leges ordinatas et institutas a Deo et illa dicitur Deus posse facere de potentia ordinata. Aliquando accipitur posse pro posse omne illud quod non includit contradictionem fieri, sive Deus ordinavit se hoc facturum sive non, quia multa potest Deus facere quae non vult facere. (also, Q: VI, q. 1) (From Baudry, Op. cit.).

theological statements and concepts. On this interpretation it is therefore mistaken to claim that the principles are entirely meaningless, or, at the other extreme, that they are significant only within theological contexts. The principles are philosophically innocuous, and in the contexts where they are used it is reasonably clear that the purpose of their use is to force a recognition that the conclusion or thesis to which they are applied is contingent and not necessary.⁷² It should not be thought, for example, that God must, of necessity, act by way of secondary causes; the divine can equally well accomplish by way of first causes what is ordinarily, or in the present order, accomplished by secondary causes. When interpreted in this way the two prin-

72 Boehner has noted that there are four guiding maxims throughout Ockham's works. These are, (1) that all things are possible for God save as involve a contradiction; (2) whatever God produces by means of secondary causes he can produce and conserve immediately without their aid; (3) God can cause, produce, and conserve every reality, be it a substance or an accident, apart from every other reality; and (4) we are not allowed to affirm a statement to be true or to maintain that a certain thing exists, unless we are forced to do so either its self-evidence or by revelation or by experience or by a logical deduction from either a revealed truth or a proposition verified by observation (Philosophical Writings, p. xx ff). These principles are clearly theological principles, however, and because of their importance throughout his works, they would indicate that Ockham was primarily a theologian. But each of these principles has a philosophical or logical essence or base. Hence, (1) involves the principle of non-contradiction, a principle which must be adhered to if there is to be intelligible discourse at all; (2) can be said to force the recognition of contingency in the natural order and of the principles derived from this order, and similarly for (3), while (4) is, of course, is the essential principle of Ockhamistic empiricism and a rule for the determination of evidence. Consequently, it would be mistaken to suppose that theological insights are entirely determinative of philosophical and logical problems, even though Ockham's interests are those of a theologian.

ciples have the function of basic axioms within a system of thought, in particular a theological system. Hence, the principle of the absolute power of God has the philosophical import of the application of the principle of non-contradiction to theistic statements.⁷³ The principle of the ordained power of God, similarly, has the import of a sub-set of consistent possibilities (or sub-sets, since the objective order evidently shows incompatibilities) within the indefinitely large range of general possibilities.

Theologically, however, the two principles have a somewhat different importance, but they do not have the force or significance which seems to be assigned to them by some commentators. It is often claimed that the attribution of absolute power to God is Ockham's way of dissociating the God of the Christian faith from all elements of Greek necessitarianism. It is true, of course, that the result of the use of these principles is the loss of many necessitarian themes, but whether the dismissal of these was Ockham's motive for using the principles is a question which is not so easily decided. Indeed, it is more in accord with the spirit of Ockham's methods to argue that the destruction of much (but obviously not all elements) of the necessity and the protection of divine freedom for action is

⁷³ In the contemporary symbolism the principle of non-contradiction is roughly $\sim(p \cdot \sim p)$. By successive transformations this becomes $(\sim p \vee p)$ and $(p \supset p)$. The latter could function as an axiom, although it would be extremely unfruitful, or, given some standard logistic systems, can be derived as a theorem.

simply the concomitant of applying logical and empiricistic methods to theistic statements. The principle of the absolute power of God is Ockham's interpretation of the first article of the creed, and is one among a number of alternative interpretations of 'omnipotence'. But there is, however, a crucial difference between the philosophical and theological use of these two principles -- a difference which is often over-looked or ignored. Philosophically, these refer to a range of general possibilities or, in the case of the ordained power, to a set of restricted and conditioned possibilities. In the context of faith at least some principles, theses, and statements are claimed to be true -- statements or principles which are at best possible from a philosophical point-of-view. But although faith requires the affirmation of truth and not merely that of possibility, the affirmation of the first article of the creed does not require the absurd affirmation that God does, in fact, do everything which is not productive of a contradiction, but only the acceptance of a range of possibilities for God. It is true that Ockham does state that God could dispense with the present order of grace, and that God could cause a man to hate him, and so on, but the force of the modal "could" must not be ignored. A common temptation is to confuse this modal term with the assertoric "it is in fact the case that ...", a confusion which can lead to a gross misrepresentation of Ockhamism. What is required for faith is the belief that there is a God who has established the present order for salvation, and this order is a result of

divine freedom, and not of some antecedent necessity.⁷⁴

With respect to the negative thesis, however, the principle of the absolute power of God prevents a reduction of this thesis to the terms of absolute and complete scepticism -- that is, the denial that there could be any immediate acquaintance with, and hence knowledge of, God whatsoever. It allows the affirmation of the principle that "it is not possible, for all that the viator knows, that he knows that there is a God", but it is not inconsistent to conjoin this with the affirmation that a cognition of the divine is possible in some other state.⁷⁵ But while Ockham

74 Cf. Gordon Leff, Medieval Thought (London, 1958) p. 289ff, and R. Seeberg, Text-Book of the History of Doctrines (Grand Rapids, Mich., 1961) Vol. II, p. 192, where the tendency to confuse the modal terms is apparent.

Although it is not possible for the viator to have any simple and proper concepts of God, it does not follow that there could be no revelation, or that in some appropriate sense of 'know', God could not make himself known to man. The restriction which must be admitted, however, is that if there is any such revelation this must be in terms of the conditions and limitations circumscribing human existence and knowledge. This is a necessity which, it must be admitted, limits God (if God is understood in the terms and descriptions utilized by Ockham), but it is not a restriction on the divine freedom to make his will known to man.

75 Formally, the possibility of another type of cognition can be said to provide a possible interpretation for third-order modalities. Again by greatly over-simplifying, it can be said that first-order modal terms refer to the level of possible intuitive cognition. Second-order modal operators refer to a cognition of the properties and relations which hold between minds or concepts and the extra-mental "world" (or this world as manifested in intuitive cognition.) Third-order modal operators, however, might be said to refer to the cognition which only a being who transcended the limitations of the body-mind, or world-mind dualism, could have. This being could be said to be God, or in the scholastic terminology, the comprehensor. In terms of an uninterpreted modal calculus these iterated modalities can be generated to infinity, but unless reasons are presented which prohibit a regress to infinity such a regress is also a possibility on the basis of the suggested interpretation. It may be possible, however, to avoid this difficulty.

denies the possibility of a natural knowledge of God or a natural theology which is productive of a natural knowledge of God, it would not be quite correct to claim that no meaning whatsoever can be attached to the expression "natural theology". Nor are all of the elements of that which might be called "natural theology" conditioned by the term 'possible'. Ockham has a number of very interesting positive suggestions, and an examination of these is now in order.

CHAPTER III

SOME POSITIVE THESES

The sceptic will immediately raise the following objection: the negative thesis may very well be defensible, but if this is the case then Ockham has clearly destroyed any possible significance for theistic language. Even if it is true that there is the possibility of an immediate acquaintance with the divine in another state, the best that can be said for this concession is that it is a logical possibility. But if theistic discourse, language, and terms have no more substance than that of a mere logical possibility, faith and religious thought has no content and can hardly have any importance or value. In any case, if the claim is to be justified that theistic statements have an assertive component, a logical possibility alone will not be sufficient; these form a semantically empty schematism, and if an assertive element is to be present it must be shown that the terms and statements of theism have significance and meaning.

The sceptic's objection cannot be dismissed. Acceptance of the negative thesis and the Ockhamist analysis of meaning does seem to entail the consequence that the term Deus has no meaning at all. Obviously, no believer will be prepared to

admit any such conclusion, since it must at least appear to be the case that something is understood when the central term is used. It may, of course, be true that the meaning assigned to the term 'God' is not what he thought it to be, or that certain claims made about this meaning cannot be justified, but it is surely experimentally false that the term has no meaning whatsoever. Yet, in terms of Ockham's analysis of meaning and significance, a written or spoken conventional symbol is meaningful only if there is a mental term or concept associated with the conventionally instituted linguistic token. Hence, if the written or spoken symbol Deus is to be meaningful a basic condition which must be satisfied is the occurrence of a mental concept. But for there to be a mental concept sensuous data must have occurred, acting as a partial cause for the arousal of intellectual functions, and these functions may then be productive of a concept. Yet the force of the negative thesis is a denial of any possible intuitive cognition of the divine in the present state which can be productive of a simple and proper concept of God. Since any abstractive cognition is dependent upon an intuitive cognition, Ockham seems to be forced to admit that the written or spoken symbol, Deus, has no associated mental term or concept, and therefore that the word is a meaningless mark or sound. But if Deus is a meaningless mark or sound it would then seem to follow that all of the distinctively theistic language is meaningless, since if the central term is without any semantic content it will then be difficult to claim that, nevertheless, the subsidiary and

dependent statements are meaningful. The price of nominalism and modified empiricism, when applied to theological statements, is therefore the reduction of the language to nonsense.

Ockham will be quite justifiably accused of the destruction of theistic significance if he cannot show (a) that the written or spoken word Deus has a referring function, and (b) that associated with this term or word is a mental name or concept, or, in other terms, that the word Deus has some semantic content. I shall attempt to show, however, that Ockham can meet these restrictions and conditions, although it will be discovered subsequently that additional difficulties arise which must be given a satisfactory solution if the Ockhamist analysis is to be acceptable. At any rate, it is reasonably clear that Ockham was quite aware of these difficulties and that any analysis which allows the sceptic's criticism must be faulty.

A: The Signification of Deus.

The first problem which Ockham's analysis of meaning must solve is the justification of the claim that the term 'God' has a referring function. In the Ockhamist terminology, this will require a description and explanation of the significative properties of the term, since a part of the sense of significare is 'to refer to'. This problem of accounting for reference and the referring properties of a term is of considerable importance in the context of scholastic epistemology and metaphysics. Prior

to Scotus and Ockham, the issue of reference was generally linked with the derivation of concepts or mental terms. For example, while the Thomistic analysis of the derivation of the verbum mentis is complex, involving impressed, expressed, intelligible, and sensible species with a sensible medium, the reference of a term is ultimately traced back through the various mental contents and operations to the extra-mental reality itself. With the use of the doctrine of analogy and the abstractive processes it might be claimed that not only is the term 'God' meaningful, but that the meaning also carries the reference. The route of signification, in this case, is from the written or spoken term to the mental name to the being named 'God'. The Ockhamist line of analysis, and epistemological presuppositions, closes this route of signification, however. The abstracted concept must terminate, so far as the semantic content is concerned, with the sensible particular. The doctrine of analogy is disallowed and is reduced to one or more of the three types of univocity which Ockham distinguishes.¹ Hence, if it is claimed that the semantic content carries the reference, there can be no reference to a divine being for the Ockhamist theory of the concept.

1 Cf. M.C. Menges, The Concept of Univocity Regarding the Predication of God and Creature According to William of Ockham (St. Bonaventure, N.Y., 1952).

"Being" is a concept common to God and creatures, and hence this concept, Ockham claims, can be univocally predicated of God and creature. I shall argue, subsequently, that this claim requires careful interpretation. In terms of the interpretation which will be suggested, the attribution of being to God is a formal requirement for intelligibility and does not allow, as some commentators seem to suggest, a rudimentary natural theology in the sense that such a discipline can be productive of knowledge of God.

Under these circumstances Ockham must either admit that the central term of theistic discourse has no referent at all, or find some way of distinguishing between meaning and reference such that a referring function can still be maintained. The Ockhamist line of analysis adopts the latter alternative, but 'reference', in its ordinary sense which supplies an answer to the question "what is it that you are talking about?", cuts across the two main divisions of meaning, namely supposition and signification. Supposition, a property of terms in the propositional matrix, must be distinguished from signification, although the senses of these terms are intimately connection. In its most general sense, supposition is "taking the place of, or standing for, something else."² Something is said to supposit for something else when it acts as a substitute for the latter. Hence, a term may be said to possess the property of supposition when it stands in the place of the object. In contrast with supposition, signification occurs when some object, linguistic token, or concept not only stands in the place of some other object or entity but can also refer to, or denote, that entity as well. Hence, a word may both supposit for something else and refer to, denote, or signify the thing or object.

2 SL: I, cap. 63: Dicitur autem suppositio quasi pro alio positio, ita quod quando terminus stat in propositione pro aliquo, -- ita quod utimur illo termino pro aliquo, de quo sive de pronomine demonstrante ipsum, ille terminus vel rectus illius termini, si sit obliquus, verificatur, -- supponit pro illo; et hoc saltem verum est, quando terminus supponens significative accipitur.

There are three different types of supposition, namely personal, simple, and material supposition. Personal supposition occurs when the term supposites for that which it also signifies or denotes. All instances of personal supposition involve a significative function or referring property.³ This description of personal supposition allows for the signification of almost any object of thought or sensation, whether this is an imaginary being, extra-mental object, sensible object, or an intention. But one of the essential features of personal supposition is that the term must have a significative use, and personal supposition cannot be said to occur unless there is this use. Simple supposition occurs when a word or term has the property of standing for something else, but the term cannot be said to have a signifying property, and that for which the term stands are universals or genera or species, that is, a specific class of mental concepts or intentions. Material supposition occurs when a linguistic token or mental term stands for a written or spoken linguistic token, as, for example, in the statement "the word 'man' is a noun." The term 'man' in this case is not said to have its significative function, or alternatively, cannot be said to have

3 Ibid, cap. 64: Suppositio personalis universaliter est illa quando terminus supponit pro suo significato, sive illud significatum sit res extra animam, sive vox, sive intentio, sive scriptum, sive quodcumque aliud imaginabile... Suppositio simplex est quando terminus supponit pro intentione animae, sed non tenetur significative, Verbi gratia sic dicendo: 'Homo est species,' iste terminus 'homo' supponit pro intentione animae, quia illa intentio est species, et tamen iste terminus 'homo' non significat proprie loquendo illam intentionem, ... Suppositio materialis est, quando terminus non supponit significative, sed supponit vel pro voce vel pro scripto.

its normal reference.

These considerations make it reasonably clear, however, that signification and the ordinary meaning of the expression "to refer" are not synonymous. Ordinarily, material or simple supposition might be said to indicate a shift in the reference of the term, or that these uses of the term indicate a different type of reference, and not that the term no longer signified some thing or entity. These difficulties arise, however, because of the meanings which significare are said to have, although significare in conjunction with the different types of supposition canvass a number of possible types of reference. The term 'to signify' has four senses ranging from an extremely restricted to a sense which almost coincides with the meaning of 'sign'. In the most restricted sense, a sign is used significatively if it is used in a proposition which is categorical, assertoric (de inesse), and true of something occurring at the present moment (de praesenti), such that the sign can be truly predicated of that for which it stands. A more comprehensive sense allows a significative function if the proposition is about that which is an occurrent in the past present or future, or if the sign occurs in a modal proposition, such that the sign can be said to signify even if the object signified does not actually exist. It is stipulated, however, that the proposition must be a true assertoric, categorical, or modal proposition. The third sense removes the restriction that the sign must supposit for, or take the place of, that which the sign signifies in the proposition. If a sign

could only be said to signify when the conditions for these senses of significare were satisfied, connotative terms could not have a significative property. Connotative terms are those which signify something directly and connote something else indirectly, as, for example, the connotative term "intellect" which signifies the intellective soul directly but indirectly connotes the act of understanding (which is but one of the functions of the intellective soul).⁴ But a fourth, or most comprehensive, sense of significare is also admitted: a sign, or even a whole proposition, has a significative function when something else is brought to the attention of the person using the sign, or when the sign connotes something else, or when something is signified in the assertoric or modal forms of the proposition.⁵

In terms of these distinctions it can be claimed that the written or spoken linguistic tokens have personal supposition, provided that there is conventional agreement upon the signification or objective reference of the token. It may therefore be said that the written or spoken word 'God' also has at least personal supposition. The word has been instituted for the purpose of signifying the divine being, and has, in a sense, the

⁴ Cf. infra, section B. The concepts in the composed concept of "God" are connotative and could not signify in the first and second senses.

⁵ SL: I, Cap. 33; *Aliter accipitur 'significare' communissime, quando aliquod signum, quod est natum esse pars propositionis vel natum esse propositio vel oratio, aliquid importat, sive principaliter sive secundario, sive in recto sive in obliquo, sive det intelligere sive connotet illud, vel quocumque modo significet, vel significet illud affirmative vel negative, quomodo hoc nomen "caecus" significat visum, quia negative, et hoc nomen 'nihil' sive 'non-aliquid' significat aliquid, sed negative,...*

function of acting as a substitute for the divine subject, and even though the nature of this being has not been determined, as long as it is possible to claim that God is an extra-mental reality, the linguistic token has personal supposition with a possible referent. If this possible referential function cannot be said to occur, however, the only other alternatives are that word 'God' has simple or material supposition; if the only possibility were that of material supposition, then the word 'God' denotes another written or spoken word 'God', or the significance of the term is reducible to its grammatical properties. If, on the other hand, simple supposition is the only alternative, then the linguistic token must be associated with a mental name or concept, but for the reasons already stated, there can be no simple and proper concept of Deus and in terms of this alternative the word would be meaningless. The crucial consideration, therefore, is whether it can be claimed that the linguistic token Deus has a significative function. In terms of the first, or most restricted, sense of significare, Deus cannot have a significative function. The restriction requires the predication of 'true' or 'false' of a de inesse, de praesenti proposition; this will require the possibility of an intuitive cognition of the divine, and since this is not a possibility in the present state, a significative function is impossible. Similar considerations apply to the second sense, for here the critical condition is that the proposition be a true proposition and truth is not predicable unless intuitive cognition is a possibility. The

third and fourth senses of significare, however, do allow the claim that the linguistic token has a significative function. The restrictions or conditions of intuitive cognition and spatio-temporal determinations do not apply, and consequently only if these general senses of signification are utilized can it be claimed that the word 'God' has personal supposition, and that the term has a putative referential function.

So far, the discussion of signification and reference has been in terms of a written or spoken linguistic token. The sceptic's point, however, was that Deus is nothing but a verbal token with no associated mental name or concept. Ockham's answer to the sceptic's criticism is, in effect, to admit it. The linguistic token does not have a proper mental term as such. In this respect it differs from terms naming simple objects or being, such as 'tree' or 'Socrates', although it may be argued that the term does have signification and reference in accordance with a conventionally established agreement on the use of the term. But even though there is no simple concept to which the linguistic token can be subordinated, it does not follow that there is no associated mental term. The believer need not be forced to the contrary-to-fact admission that nothing is understood when the term is used. It is Ockham's claim that a series of predicates, specifically those traditionally ascribed to God, form a complex mental name. Some of the predicates which he lists are "creator", "refuge", "infinite being", "pure spirit", "immortal", and "incorruptible". These terms are, of course,

linguistic tokens having personal supposition and signifying an extra-mental divine being. They may also be predicated of the linguistic token 'God', but to do so is neither the proper nor the ordinary use of these terms.⁶ Because of the use of certain specific predicates the linguistic token Deus comes to be associated with these are other mental names, but the word Deus is not, properly speaking, subordinated to this complex of concepts in the way in which words denoting simple objects are subordinated to a mental concept.⁷

Each individual predicate may be said to signify God insofar as it is a linguistic token with personal supposition, but the predicates also have, or can have, a mental component. "Wise", "just", "good", "governor", etc., are ordinary terms the meaning of which is determined by an acquaintance with wise, just, and good persons. Any term which denotes that which is, or can be, an element in sensitive or intellective intuitive cognition

6 Q: VI, 5: Sicut dicimus, Deus est creator, refugium, etc., et tamen nomen non praedicatur de Deo pro nomine, quia non denotatur quod Deus sit hoc nomen creator vel hoc nomen refugium. Sed denotatur quod Deus sit res significata per hoc nomen refugium, ita conceptus praedicatur de Deo, non tamen pro conceptu, quia non denotatur quod Deus sit ille conceptus, sed denotatur quod sit res cuius est ille conceptus et similitudo. Ad formam dico quod Deus vere praedicatur de Deo, sed Deus non praedicatur de conceptu Dei, verum est quando supponit pro se sicut dicendo iste conceptus est Deus, sicut nullum nomen est Deus, sed quando conceptus Dei stat significative tunc praedicatur de Deo, non in actu signato sed in actu exercitato. ... Ad tertium dico quod nulla est contradictio dicere, quidquid praedicatur de Deo praedicatur de conceptu Dei terminis in propositionibus acceptis significative, et tamen quod ille conceptus non est Deus, et hoc quia praedicatio non debet sic exerceri, conceptus est Deus, sed sic ens infinitum est Deus ubi accipitur conceptus non pro conceptu sed pro Deo cuius est conceptus.

7 For the subordination of terms, vide Boehner, Collected Articles, p. 232ff.

denotes that which may be productive of a mental name or concept through the processes of abstraction and the act of understanding. The linguistic token Deus cannot be subordinated to a proper concept as such, but it can have an association with a complex concept composed from the traditional predicates. But since mental names also have personal supposition they can also be said to have a significative function -- a referential characteristic supplied by the act of understanding. Hence, the mental concepts to which the linguistic tokens 'wise', 'just', 'creator', etc., are subordinated can each signify the extra-mental divine being in the same direct fashion in which the token 'God' signifies directly the same being.

The mental concepts or predicates which constitute the complex concept of "God" are said to be names of God rather than attributes of God, and in this Ockham follows the suggestion of the Lombard. The predicates, or names, are said to signify the same being and because of this are also called synonymous names for God.⁸ This sense of synonymity, however, is a special and technical use of the term. "Synonymity", as Ockham defines this term, is equivalent to "identity of reference" and not "identity of meaning", and the divine names are synonymous only in the (somewhat innocuous) sense that they signify, refer to, or denote the same being, and not in the clearly unacceptable sense that

8 Q: VI, 5: His suppositis dico ad argumentum negando assumptum. Nam unum nomen synonymum praedicatur de quocumque de quo praedicatur alterum, si termini sumantur significative, et tamen unum nomen synonymum non est idem totaliter cum alio, quia nomina synonyma sunt distincta nomina quamvis significant omnino idem.

they have an identical intension or connotation (identical concepts). Obviously, the terms "creator", "governor", "refuge", and "infinite being" do not have the same intentional meaning; their synonymy occurs only when, in each individual act of understanding which uses these terms with a referential sense, the specific concepts are thought to have identity of reference.⁹

A final objection must be considered: there is a serious

9 SL: I, cap. 6: Large dicuntur illa synonyma, quae simpliciter significant idem omnibus modis, ita quod nihil aliquo modo significatur per unum, quin per reliquum eodem modo significetur, quamvis non omnes utentes credant ipsa idem significare, sed decepti existimant aliquid significari per unum, quod non significatur per reliquum.

Ockham notes that the concepts are to be predicated of God in the actus exercitus and not in the actus signatus. This distinction roughly corresponds with the distinction between a subject-predicate assertoric statement, and the subject-predicate form used to make a statement about another statement, or to express a definition. Both of these are intellectual acts, but they have different functions. The actus exercitus occurs when there is the use of language to refer to, or to describe, some entity or state-of-affairs. The actus exercitus involves the apprehension of terms, formulation of a proposition, and assent to the proposition. An example of this act occurs in the use of the expression "man is an animal" where this is a statement which can be verified by an appeal to the individual instances denoted by the terms. If this statement is transformed into the statement, "Animal is predicated of man," it becomes an expression referring to first order terms and is then an instance of the actus signatus. The manner in which the latter statement will be verified is quite different from the manner in which the former will be confirmed. Ockham's insistence that the term 'God' ought not to be predicated of the concept is, in part, a recognition that the standard usage of the term involves the actus exercitus and not the actus signatus. This does not mean, however, that under no circumstances can there be a use of terms and expressions with the actus signatus, but such a use must be clearly distinguished and is properly speaking only appropriate in the context of a philosophical or theological discussion of theological discourse. This type of discourse is clearly quite different from the ordinary use of theological terms in the context of worship.

ambiguity with respect to the signification and reference of the term 'God', whether this is written, spoken, or mental. To declare that a reference is intended in the use of a term is by no means the same as asserting that a reference is possible. At least one consideration in favour of the first and second more restricted senses of significare is precisely that any intended reference can only be justified by the factual or possible confirmation of this reference, namely in terms of that which either is, or can be, an item of immediate experience.¹⁰ But the unrestricted senses of significare merely seems to allow for an intended reference. If this is to be a significant and justifiable reference, then it must be possible to argue that God can be a item in experience, and of course, in the present state this is not possible. Ockham has a way out of this difficulty -- or at least what would appear to be a way out of the difficulty -- since, while no reference can be claimed for the term by the viator, the term or terms will supposedly have this possibility of reference confirmed in another state, namely the state of the beatus. The occurrence of such a state is at least a logical possibility and consequently it is not necessary to assert that the unrestricted senses allow only for putative or intended reference.¹¹ If this possibility of future experience is admitted then Ockham can

10 Cf. P. F. Strawson, "On Referring", reprinted in Essays in Conceptual Analysis, ed. by A. Flew, p. 44ff.

11 There are additional difficulties with the notion of a "supernatural state", most of which are connected with the significance of the expression. These will appear in the subsequent discussion of the composed concept.

claim a significative function for both the word 'God' and the elements of the complex concept itself.

B: The Composed Concept of "God".

Ockham's analysis of meaning makes a clear distinction between meaning and reference. He can argue that at either the level of linguistic tokens or at the level of the mental term, the central term of theistic discourse has a reference. The next aspect which must be considered, however, is the semantic content or meaning of the mental complex functioning as the mental term. It is Ockham's claim that God is "known" in a composed concept, the elements of which divide into two logically distinct types of concepts, namely those which have positive signification and those which have negative signification. Each of these two types present special difficulties and problems, but before the logical divisions of the composed concept are examined it is necessary to first investigate some of the details of this composed concept itself.

Ockham states, categorically, that the viator cannot have any simple, proper, affirmative, or absolute concept of (or about) God before or after the composition or division of terms into propositional form. If the viator is to have a concept of "God" then this must be non-simple, non-proper, non-affirmative, and non-absolute. The alternative terms for these contraries, at least in this context, and which will describe any possible concept

of "God", are "composed", "common", "negative", and "connotative". If there is to be a mental term for the divine, this concept must be constructed from these elements, or some combination of these elements.¹² Each of these terms describe types of possible concepts, and each represents a technical, and quite precisely determined, use of the expression. They do not have their ordinary or common meaning and therefore some definitions are in order.

The correlative of the connotative term is the absolute term. An absolute term is one which signifies one, and only one, thing or being, and has no oblique or indirect reference.¹³ A Connotative term, as has been indicated, has a direct reference to some being or entity and connotes, or indirectly refers to, something else.¹⁴ In terms of this description, however, there does not appear to be any reason why the basic theistic terms ought not to be considered absolute terms. But this possibility must be dismissed since, properly speaking, absolute terms have real definitions, while connotative terms can only have what are called "nominal definitions". A real definition (diffinitio exprimens quid rei) is an expression, complex in content and structure, which makes known the entire nature of the thing defined, without using, denoting, or referring to, anything extrinsic or accidental to the thing. When the entity is known in or through the real

12 Q: IV, 18: Ad istam quaestio dico quod viator ex puris naturalibus non potest habere de Deo cognitionem aliquam quae non sit absoluta non connotative, affirmative non negativa, simplex non composita, propria non communis, ante compositionem et divisionem.

13 SL: I, cap. 10.

14 Idem.

definition, there is a conceptual grasp of the "parts" of the thing. Since God is said to be a radically simple being without parts, this description rules out an essential definition of God. There is, however, an additional reason why there cannot be a real definition of God: real definitions require the possibility of determining whether the predicates truly apply to the thing or not. Real definitions must be of those entities which are epistemically possible, and this condition requires the possibility of intuitive cognition, abstraction, the formulation of propositions, and the possibility of the predication of 'true' or 'false'.¹⁵ Hence, in terms of these conditions, there cannot be a real definition of God. In contrast with absolute terms, connotative terms have nominal definitions (diffinitio exprimens quid nominis).¹⁶ In terms of the linguistic expression, these definitions are compendious formulae, but a nominal definition is not merely a collection of words adhering to certain gram-

¹⁵ Q: V, 19.

¹⁶ SL: I, cap. 26: 'definitio exprimens quid rei' dupliciter accipitur, scilicet large, et sic comprehendit definitionem strictam sumptam et etiam descriptivam definitionem. Aliter accipitur hoc nomen 'definitio' stricte; et sic est sermo compendiosus exprimens totam naturam rei, nec aliquid extrinsecum rei definitae declarans.

Sciendum est autem, quod definitio sic stricte sumpta non nisi solius substantiae tamquam rei expressae per definitionem; et ideo accipiendo definitum pro nomine convertibili cum definitione talis definitio non est nisi nominum, non verborum nec aliarum partium orationis.

Definitio autem exprimens quid nominis est oratio explicite declarans, quid per unam dictionem importatur. Sicut aliquis volen docere alium, quid significat hoc nomen 'album', dicit, quod idem significat, quod haec oratio 'aliquid habens albedinem.' Et ista definitio potest esse nominum non solum illorum, de quibus potest vere affirmari esse in rerum natura, sed etiam illorum, de quibus talis praedicatio est impossibilis.

mathematical rules. Most linguistic expressions, if meaningful at all, are subordinated to intentions or concepts, and this observation applies to nominal (and real) definitions. Hence, a nominal definition is a collection of concepts by means of which some other term is defined or the meaning of some other term is made known. In addition to connotative terms, relatives, privatives, negatives, verbs, adverbs, adjectives, and conjunctions all have nominal definitions. Finally, a criterion for deciding whether a proposed expression is a nominal or a real definition is to ask whether the parts of the definiens can stand for precisely those elements of the being (or beings) signified by the definiendum.

The contrary of a proper concept is a common concept. A proper concept can be described as any concept proper to some individual or entity, or applies only to some individual or entity, although the most usual sense is that which applies to one and only one genus or species. Verification of the claim that some concept is proper requires the possibility of immediate intellectual or sensitive cognition. A common concept is one which is common to, or applicable to more than one individual. Strictly speaking, that which is common is a term or concept, and is therefore common to the many individual by way of predication. There are, however, three ways in which a term may be common "by way of predication", namely ~~denominatively~~, equivocally, or univocally. In its most general sense, denominative predication occurs when an attribute implies something

distinct from the subject and not inhering in the subject, while connoting something which the subject can cause or produce.¹⁷

Denominative predication, therefore, involves connotative terms and may be applied to God (or more correctly, the word 'God' or the concept of "God"), as in the expression, "God has the power to create." But among the various types of predication, that which is of greatest significance for the composed concept of God is univocal predication, since it is in terms of one (and only one) sense of 'univocity' that at least one concept can be univocally predicated of God and creature.¹⁸ In the strict sense of the term, 'univocal' applies only to linguistic tokens, but in a comprehensive (and extended) sense 'univocal' can also be applied to the concepts which correspond with the written or spoken words.¹⁹ In this extended sense, there are three different ways in which a concept may be univocal. (a) A term or concept is univocal when it is common to a number of entities having a perfect resemblance to each other, and exemplifying no dissimilarities, such that the only possible difference is that of a numerical difference. (b) A concept can also be univocal when it applies to a number of entities which are neither completely similar nor completely dissimilar -- hence the universal term

17 L. Baudry, Lexique Philosophique, p. 207.

18 The term 'equivocal' has a technical meaning. Only words can be equivocal, and equivocality occurs when one word is subordinated to two or more mental terms. If these mental terms have no similarity in meaning, then there is no great difference between equivocality and the third sense of 'univocity'.

19 IS: Dist. II, q. 9N.

'man' may be univocally predicated of many men even though these individuals are neither entirely alike nor entirely unlike. Finally, there is the extreme case, (c), where a concept is univocally predicated of many individuals, or common to many individuals, even though the entities have nothing in common whatsoever, whether in terms of resemblance, substance, or accident. Only in this sense may a term be predicated of God and creature, since these have nothing in common in terms of substance, accident, or resemblance. In this sense, also, a term may be predicated of a plurality which is nevertheless said to form a unified entity; the only condition which must hold in this very general sense of univocity is that the reference is at least to an entity, "some x".²⁰

20 IIIS, q. 9Q: Tertio accipitur univocum pro conceptu communi multis non habentibus aliquam similitudinem quantum ad substantialia nec quantum ad accidentalia. Isto modo quilibet conceptus conveniens Deo et creaturae est eis univocus, quia in Deo et creatura nihil penitus nec intrinsecum nec extrinsecum sunt eiusdem rationis.

Tertio modo dicitur univocum praedicabile de pluribus quae tamen sunt una res. Et hoc modo relatio dicitur univoce de relationibus divinis quae tamen sunt una res, quia sunt una essentia numero.

The differences between the senses of univocity can be illustrated using some of the devices of contemporary notation. In terms of the propositional function $F(x)$, sense (a) will be successive instantiations of the function, i.e., $F(a)$, $F(b)$, $F(c)$, etc. Allowing F to stand for a collection of predicates, this will then be $(FGHIJKLMN)(a)$, $(FGHILJKMN)(b)$, etc.; or simply $(FGHIJKLMN)(x)$. Sense (b) will be $(FGH)(a)$, $(FHI)(b)$, $(FIJ)(c)$, etc., or simply $(FGH)(x)$, $(FHI)(x)$, $(FIJ)(x)$, where the common predicate is F . Sense (c), however, will be $(FGH)(x)$, $(IJK)(x)$, $(LMN)(x)$, where no predicates are common and the only "common" element is the propositional variable, or place-marker, which serves to indicate where any individual constant may be written to produce a singular proposition. I shall argue, subsequently, that this is precisely the sense in which Ockham's claim that 'being' is univocal to God and creatures is to be interpreted.

The contrary of the simple concept is the composed, or composite concept.²¹ The composed concept of God cannot, itself, be a simple concept, although it may have simple concepts as constituents. The term compositum may designate that which is an individual composed of parts expressible by a real definition, but this sense of the term cannot be applicable to the concept of God. It may also mean "that which is common to several individuals", and hence, will indicate a universal term, or a term which is predicated univocally. This sense of the term will apply to the composed concept of God, since at least some of the individual elements in the composite concept will be composita, in this sense. But the

21 Ockham's analysis of the "simple" concept involves a reference to different types of simple concepts, different types of composita, cognoscere confuse and cognoscere distincte. It is not correct to say, however, that the essential property of all simple concepts is that they are conceived, or grasped, in a single act of understanding, while the composed concept requires a number of successive acts. Some of the concepts in the composed concept of God are simple ("being", "one", etc.), while others are themselves composed concepts (e.g., "wise", "just", etc.), analogous to the concept of "man", for example, which can be said to be composed from "animal", "rational", "risible", etc. Each of the latter can be apprehended in a single act of intellection, but the acts must be successive. Hence, Ockham makes a distinction between a simplex concept, and simpliciter simplex concept (Cf. IS: Dist. III, q. 5.) The simpliciter simplex concept is one which cannot be analysed into further parts, and some of these are the transcendentals, namely "being", "something", "other", and "one". The simplex, however, is that which is not composed of parts, or, if there are parts, these are such as to essentially combine to make up one, whole, unified, entity. Of such a nature are the separated substances, the beings of reason, universals, and all the accidents of the intellectual soul. Hence, the act of understanding by means of which the meaning of the term "man" is grasped may be called a simple act. The simplicity of the act in this case is its uniqueness and its referential function, but the "content of the concept" may be complex and a apprehension of this "content" may require a detailed phenomenological analysis.

term may also have the meaning of "a term signifying a plurality of things signified by the predicates of a nominal definition."²² In this sense -- which Ockham notes is not the proper sense of the term -- the complex of mental terms which constitute the nominal definition of 'God' may be called a compositum. It is constituted from several more or less distinct concepts, some of which may themselves be composite and some of which may be simpliciter simple.²³ The latter can be grasped in a single act of understanding, but the apprehension of the composite concept of God will require successive acts of understanding.

The term 'God' has a nominal definition; it is by means of this type of definition that the meaning of the term is made known. Stating this definition will require the use of a number of predicates forming a complex expression. But the predicates, such as "wise", "good", "just", etc., cannot be said to constitute a real definition and therefore the meanings of the terms themselves cannot be essentially (in terms of conceptual structure) connected, or, for example, exhibit the logical relations of class-membership or class-inclusion, entailment, or the relation of super-ordination and subordination. Nevertheless, each of these

²² L. Baudry, Op. cit. p. 49.

²³ IS: Dist. III, q. 5T; IS: Dist. III, q. 5L, O.
E. C. Menges has noted (Op. cit. p. 24) that there is a distinction between simplex, simpliciter simplex, and confuse, but there seems to be a failure to distinguish between simplex which is a function of intellectual intuition, in the sense of the work of reason alone, and simplex in relation to sensitive intuition. In the former sense, ens is a simpliciter simplex and can be applied to God, since if God is to be thinkable at all then this being must be at least a being of reason and the understanding. Otherwise, the claim of univocity for "being" is vacuous.

predicates has a mental term and if the predicate is itself complex then the distinguishable elements in that concept may exhibit these types of relations. But while the individual members of the composite concept may have these relations, the question must be asked, what possible logical or conceptual relationship do the individual members of the composite concept have with each other? If no relation is possible, or if no relation can be distinguished, then the nominal definition of 'God' is merely an aggregation of concepts, apprehended in successive acts of understanding certainly, but because it is a mere aggregation the order of apprehension will make no difference to the composite concept, nor will the "conceptual content" of the particular constituent concepts in any way affect the composite. I should like to argue, however, that Ockham is not necessarily reduced to this unpleasant admission. It is at least possible to argue that the predicates and concepts are related by means of the logical connective of conjunction. Hence, it is not said that God is "wise" or "just" or "merciful", but rather that this being is "wise" and "just" and "merciful". Because of this, it is not correct to say that the concepts form a mere aggregation, and it cannot be claimed that the structural elements of any one concept have no effect on the other members of the composite concept. The truth functional definition of a conjunction or conjunctive proposition requires that all of the members have the value of "true" if the entire complex is to be true, and it is false when one or more members of the conjunction are false. Ockham, in fact, is aware of this

definition and gives a precise verbal statement of it.²⁴ If this definition is stated in more formal terms in order to avoid begging the question as to the meaning of 'true' and 'false', with 'true' (or 'T') as the simple contradictory opposite of 'false' (' $\sim T$ '), and hence 'T' =_{df} ' $\sim \sim T$ '), then the functional value of a conjunctive proposition as a whole is 'T' when all of the individual components have this value, and the opposite value when one or more of the individual components have the opposite value.²⁵ If, therefore, two specific concepts 'P' and 'Q' form the complex concept of God, and these appear to be affirmative, the composed concept itself will be affirmative. But if an additional concept 'R' is included, and this concept appears to be negative, then the value of the composite becomes the value of ' $\sim T$ '. On the other hand, if in the former of these two cases it is discovered that 'P' or 'Q' is self-contradictory or materially false, then the value of the composite must then be said to change to the contradictory opposite. Hence, the "content" of the concept will make a considerable difference to the logical characteristics of the composite concept, and while the individual constituents are not affected by the properties of the other constituents, the qualities of the whole are entirely dependent upon some of the qualities of the component concepts.

24 SL: II, cap. 31: Ad veritatem copulativae requiritur, quod utraque pars sit vera. Et ideo si quaecumque pars copulativae sit falsa, ipsa copulativa est falsa.

25 Except in the case where all of the components are negative; in this case the composite takes a negative value and the composite becomes equivalent to a series of affirmative disjuncts, $\sim(P \vee Q \vee R, \dots)$

The discussion of the composed concept has so far been in terms of such predicates as "creator", "refuge", "wise", etc. All of these may be called positive concepts in the sense that each of these concepts obtains its semantic content in terms of immediate experience. But if it is the case that the conceptual analysis of these concepts gives a consistent ordering of the conceptual elements, then the entire concept will be positive in character, and the meaning of the composite concept of 'God' will be whatever meaning these terms have. This, however, has the consequence that God is understood to be wise in the way in which persons are wise, creator in the way in which natural beings create, etc., and the deity so conceived will be understood in purely anthropomorphic terms. Ockham avoids this reduction by the inclusion of negative predicates, and the stipulation that at least some of the constituents of the composed concept must have a negative signification. These negative concepts, in fact, are not only essential to the composite, but also form a second class of terms correlative to the positive and affirmative concepts.

All negative terms have nominal definitions, and since, in negative signification and predication there is an indirect reference to something else, negatives are also connotative terms. But there are two notions of "negation" to be found throughout Ockham's works; the commonest, perhaps, is that which is related to composition and division of terms in the formation of a proposition. This type of negation is roughly

that which is intrinsic to the "negative judgment". But Ockham also indicates a usage of negation which is very nearly that which is involved in the notions of "class" and "complement-class". While the former of these two senses of 'negation' involves negative judgments, the latter sense involves negative terms. Ockham makes it quite clear, however, that the type of negation which applies to the composite concept of 'God' is the latter, and employs the notions of "class" and "complement-class". The description of a negative concept is given in answer to the objection that some of the concepts in the composed concept are negative, but a negative concept cannot be affirmatively predicated of the thing. If this is permitted then it is clear that contradictions will result. If one were to assert that some object has the predicate "not white" and to assert in addition that it has the property of "white", then one is asserting the explicit contradiction that the object is both white and not white. Hence if there is to be a composed concept which includes a number of components, these must be either all affirmative, or, if negatives are to be included, these must be understood to be affirmative concepts negatively predicated in a negative judgment. Thus, the proper negative way must be "God is not material", rather than "God is non-material."

Ockham's theory requires the possibility of affirmative predication of negative concepts. His answer to this objection is to claim that a negative concept signifies something negatively and also something affirmatively. For example, to state that

something is not-white requires the negative signification of some whiteness (a quality inhering in some thing), while the affirmative signification is everything which does not have the quality of whiteness.²⁶ A re-statement of this theory is perhaps clearer in class-terminology: the negative signification is the class of all white things, or all things having the property of whiteness, while the affirmative signification is the complement of this class, namely the class of all non-white things, or things which do not have the property of whiteness. Since the universe of discourse is explicitly unrestricted, the complementary class has for its members every object, item, or entity which lacks the requisite property of whiteness. Hence, the negative and affirmative signification together exhaust the entire universe of discourse. But the negative signification cannot be isolated from the affirmative signification. It is not

26 Q: V, 7: Ad primum istorum dico quod conceptus negativus aliquid significat negative, aliquid affirmative. Exemplum, non albedo significat negative albedines, de quibus non verificatur, nec pro illis supponit. Affirmative autem significat omnia alia ab albedine, et de illis praedicatur affirmative, et pro illis supponit, quia quocumque alio demonstrato ab albedine, haec est vera, hoc est albedo. Et per hoc ad argumentum dico quod conceptus negativus non praedicatur affirmative de re quando significat negative, bene tamen praedicatur affirmative de re quando significat affirmative, et ideo de nullo finito praedicatur infinitum affirmative, quia infinitum significat omnia finita negative, sed omnia infinita significat affirmative, et ideo dico quod de omnibus illis vere praedicatur, et pro illis vere supponit.

(In IS: Dist. XXXIX, q. 1C, Ockham states the correlative theory of propositions: Secundo modo accipiendo scire dico quod Deus non potest plura scire quam scit, cuius ratio est quia omne verum scitur a Deo, et semper aequalia sunt vera; unde non est possibile quod plura sint vera in uno tempore quam in alio, quia semper altera pars contradictionis est vera, et nihil est verum nisi sit altera pars contradictionis et non est possibile quod utraque pars sit vera, ...)

possible for there to be a distinct and independent negative concept of "not-white". The definition states that something is both affirmatively and negatively signified. The supposition of the negative concept is for those things which are other than white. But as has been argued in connection with Ockham's analysis of meaning and signification, reference is a property conferred by the act of understanding. The act of understanding does not occur, however, until there has been some sensitive or intellectual intuitive cognition, from which a concept may be derived by abstraction. This concept is, so to speak, the "material component" and is a necessary condition for the sign-functioning of the act of understanding and for the occurrence of a referential or significative property. That which is derived from experience and which constitutes this "material component" is not negative in character, but a positive abstract phenomenal element. In this sense there can be no negative concepts, as such. There are no negative concepts given in and through experience, and there cannot be, for example, a concept of "non-being" as such. As a consequence, negative concepts cannot be described in terms of some derived "material component", but must be analysed in terms of a positive element derived from experience and the signification or reference which this concept may have as a result of the act of understanding. Hence, Ockham states that the affirmative signification of a negative concept is everything which is not that from which the "material component" of the concept has been derived -- for example, white things or whiteness in the case of

the concept of "white". Ockham's distinction between meaning and reference is, therefore, crucial; if he were required to assert that the meaning (the "material component" of the concept) carries the reference, it would be impossible for him to provide a description of negative concepts. Negative judgments, of course, would always be a possibility, but there would be no possibility of giving class-terminology any sense or meaning. The consequence of this would be that a composite concept of 'God' is a conceptual impossibility; believers might claim justifiable negative judgments, but they could not make the claim to have a concept of 'God' as such.

The distinction between affirmative and negative signification is, perhaps, more evident when some of the negative concepts are examined. Examples of negative concepts which apply to God are "infinite", "incorporeal", "immortal", etc. Of these, one of the most central in importance is "infinite", for which the expression, "non-finite", can be substituted in this context.²⁷ The negative signification of the term (the class-term) is all finite things, and the affirmative signification is

27 Ibid: Ad propositum dico quod quia finitum et infinitum opponuntur, ideo de nullo praedicatur infinitum affirmative de quo praedicatur finitum affirmative, et hoc quia infinitum significat omnia finita negative, sed de illis quae non sunt finita cuiusmodi est Deus praedicatur infinitum affirmative....

Ockham distinguishes between an intensive infinity (an infinity in terms of perfection) and an extensive infinity (or an infinity of objects, motion, or spatial transitions. (IS: Dist. XVII, q.8X; Q: VII, 16. Cf. Baudry, Op. cit. p. 121-122). Finitum may also take the sense of that which is perfectly loved, but which the will cannot achieve: (Q: VII, 14) Illud est finitum quo amato perfecte, voluntas non quietatur.

everything which is not-finite, or other than finite (the complement-class). Since everything in the natural order, or created order can be said to be finite in some respect or other, the negative signification is then everything which is an item in the natural order, and the affirmative signification of "infinite" is everything which is other than a natural fact (or created fact, to include a possible angelic host). A similar analysis holds for such terms as "incorporeal", "immortal", etc., except that the negative signification (the class term) will have a reduced extension, namely those things which are corporeal or mortal.

When these negative predicates are added to the composite concept of 'God', the force of such predication is to deny that God has the properties defining the class concepts. They do involve the assertion that God has some of the predicates of the complement-class (although it is undetermined, and perhaps cannot be determined in the present state, what these predicates are). In any case, the composite concept now includes at least one member which can be said to have the value of ' $\sim T$ '. The entire concept then takes the value of ' $\sim T$ ', even though there may be one or more positive concepts in the composite -- assuming for the moment that positive concepts are possible. This observation has a number of interesting consequences and problems, but before an examination of these is attempted, there is one very important exception to this analysis of negative concepts. Ockham allows that affirmative and negative concepts are contradictory when the concept signify precisely the same thing. But

if the signification is not of the same item, then both affirmative and negative signification is present, and this can be interpreted, as I have argued, in terms of 'class' and 'complement-class'. This analysis does not hold, however, for ens and its correlative non ens.²⁸ The term ens, in its comprehensive sense, signifies everything which exists, or can exist, or which can be an object of thought,²⁹ and therefore if it is considered as a class term, "being" denotes everything which has singular, substantial, accidental existence, or exists as a being of reason. The complement-class "non-being" has no affirmative signification, however; at best it can be said to have only negative signification -- namely that denoted by "being". There can be no complement for being because there is nothing for the term "non-being" to signify. The claim that "non-being" has an affirmative signification would involve the self-contradictory assertion that nothing is something or some real thing either as an extra-mental reality or as a being of reason. In the class-terminology, the complement-class "non-being" has no members whatsoever and would then be roughly equivalent to the null-class. "Being" then

28 Ibid: Ad probationem dico quod quamvis conceptus affirmativus et negativus contradicunt, non tamen penitus idem significant, nisi ista contradictio ens et non ens, quia quidquid significat ens affirmativus significat non ens negativus, et nihil aliquod significat negativus. In aliis contradictoriis conceptus negativus multa significat affirmativus, quae conceptus affirmativus non significat, sicut non album multa significat affirmativus quae non significat album.

29 Q: V, 21: Ens reale aliquando accipitur pro omni re existente in rerum natura. Et sic ens rationis est ens reale. Aliquando accipitur solum pro ente existente extra animam. Et sic ens rationis non est ens reale.

becomes the universal class, or class of all objects or entities.

C: Negative signification and the Negative Concepts.

The sceptic may object, however, that Ockham's notion of a composite concept of 'God' is full of inconsistencies, particularly since negative concepts have been conjoined with affirmative concepts. In any case, there would appear to be two very serious difficulties: (1) it would appear that while the negative thesis rules out any possible knowledge of God by means of positive concepts derived from sensitive or intellectual experience, the composite concept with its negative components contradicts this thesis. These are negative concepts, surely, but they are also concepts and it is at least plausible that something is known about God. But if this is the case, then Ockham's analysis of theistic statements is clearly inconsistent; it is self-contradictory to assert that the viator can neither know that God exists nor what properties this being has while at the same time allowing the believer concepts of God, whether these are positive or negative. (2) While Ockham does appear to use the class-terminology, this interpretation of the negative concepts reduces the composed concept of 'God' to unintelligibility unless some restrictions are imposed on the affirmative and negative signification of these terms; if these restrictions are not incorporated, then the composite concept is productive of absurdities.

These are serious objections, but I shall argue that Ockham is not subject to these criticisms and difficulties. Furthermore, his notion that the concept of 'God' is a composite containing a number of negative terms implies a number of extremely interesting suggestions about the logic of theistic terms and propositions, not the least important of which is that the negative terms prevent the composite concept of 'God' from degenerating into a crude anthropomorphism or literalism. Ockham does not give a detailed or explicit account of these logical properties, and therefore the interpretation and the implications for which I shall argue will be somewhat speculative. But I should also want to argue that they are fully in accord with his analysis of meaning and with his logical theories.

When an object or entity is said to lack a certain property, it would appear to be the case that something is known about that entity. Hence, if it can be said that God is not-finite, it would appear that an item of information has been gained. Indeed, if the notion that all negation is a determination is a viable principle, successive negations should produce a "route of convergence" towards a concept proper only to one individual or entity. For if all the entities and properties in the universe are inspected disjunctively, it should be possible, by denying the disjuncts successively, to arrive at a positive and affirmative concept of the entity. If, however, successive negations do not, or cannot, produce such a proper concept, then all that can be claimed for the entity under

examination is that -- if it is a being at all -- then it has none of the properties or predicates of the natural order. But from this it will also follow that the being is not, or cannot be, known in the present state.

This possibility of a "route of convergence" by way of negation, terminating in a concept of God must be dismissed, and the reasons why this cannot be the case depend upon the logical properties of the negative concepts themselves. The negative concept with the greatest scope rules out the possibility of any such concept, while those negative concepts with lesser scope and extension would, if no restrictions were implied, provide far too much information about the divine. For example, if "infinite" is taken to mean "not-finite" then this complement-class negatively signifies all finite things, or things of the created and natural order. The scope of this term then is everything of which it is epistemically possible to have a sensitive or intellectual intuitive cognition. But a sensitive or intellectual intuitive cognition of created things is the only set of epistemic possibilities open to the viator, and it therefore follows that while "infinite" may have both an affirmative and a negative signification, it cannot be said to indicate an associated natural concept at all. Hence, the negative concept of the "infinite" cannot provide any information about the divine -- although it has the very important function of making clear that whatever God is, this being is not identical with, or even similar to, natural objects, beings,

or entities. But in contrast with the term "infinite", the other negative concepts function in precisely the opposite manner. "Immortal" and "incorporeal", if unrestricted in the scope of their signification would provide far too much information about God. The negative signification of these concepts is, of course, mortal and corporeal beings. The affirmative signification, however, would be everything which is non-mortal and non-corporeal in nature. But if God is said to be immortal in this unrestricted sense, the absurdity will result that God is a stone, or a mountain, etc., and similarly for the other negative concepts having an extension numerically less than that of "infinite".

The Ockhamistic theory that there is a composed concept associated with the linguistic token 'God' would be productive of these absurdities if the negative concept of the "infinite" were not included in the composite concept; this concept imposes restriction both upon the concepts which can be selected for inclusion in the composite concept and upon the affirmative signification of other affirmatively predicated negative concepts. Hence, while the normal affirmative signification of the negative concept "immortal" would be everything which does not have the property of mortality, this affirmative signification cannot be permitted when "immortal" is conjoined with "infinite". The affirmative signification of "infinite" is everything which does not have the property of finitude and this will rule out any of the affirmative significations of "immortal" which refer to

natural objects, entities, or properties (and similarly for any other negative concept which has an affirmative signification with a lesser scope than that of "infinite"). But it does not follow that, therefore, "immortal" (or any of the other negative concepts) has now no affirmative signification whatsoever. "Immortal" cannot signify anything ruled out by the super-ordinate concept of the infinite, but it can still signify the being who is both infinite and immortal, namely God, since the stipulation is that the affirmative signification is everything not signified negatively.

Ockham is not, therefore, subject to the criticism that the negative concept produces nothing but an inconsistent or absurd concept of God. Restrictions are imposed on the affirmative signification of the subordinate concepts by the super-ordinate terms (ordered in terms of increasing generality). But there are other restrictions resulting from the selection of positive and negative concepts which are to constitute the composite concept, or which, because of the influence of the canonical tradition, are taken to be the proper affirmative and negative predicates of the divine. For example, a super-ordinate class for the term "mortal" might be "living beings". Predication of "living" of the divine must be compatible with the other predicates also properly ascribed to God, and one of these is that of a "necessarily existing being". But this will require that the conjunctive concept, "living and not subject to death and corruption" be included to avoid inconsistency with "necessary

existence". But as I have indicated, however, the attribution of "necessary existence" is dependent upon the use of one specific concept of God, namely that common to the western theistic tradition. There are many other concepts of God, some of which might conceivably allow the attribution of the contradictory of this expression. But because the more or less central concept of God in the theistic tradition has been adopted, such predicates as "capable of growth" or "capable of reproduction" cannot be included since these produce an inconsistent concept. Hence, in addition to the ordering of the concepts constituent to the composite concept of God, the specific tradition of religious reflection imposes additional restrictions on the conceptual content of the term.

If the negative concept cannot be said to give any information about the divine, and cannot provide a "route of convergence" to a proper concept by virtue of which the divine might be known, it is surely proper to ask what possible significance or value this concept could have for either the believer or the theologian? Indeed, it would appear that Ockham's proposals indicate a reduction of theology to some variety of negative theology -- but a negative theology in which the theologian is ultimately reduced to silence, having nothing informative to communicate about God, nor with any prospects for further investigation of theological problems or terms. This observation is, in part, correct; Ockhamistic theology must be classified as a type of negative theology, so far as the signification of the terms in the composite concept

is concerned. But the sceptical consequences do not necessarily follow and there are at least four considerations which support this contention:

(a) As I have indicated, the inclusion of negative concepts in the composite concept of God allows Ockham to avoid an anthropomorphic concept of the divine. Indeed, given Ockham's theories of meaning and reference, inclusion of these negative concepts may be the only way in which such a reduction can be avoided. But the inclusion of negative concepts is also the way in which he is able to avoid a reduction of religious and theological statements to a crude literalism. Negative concepts are distinctively different from affirmative concepts -- not in terms of the semantic content or meaning, which is the same for both affirmative and negative concepts, but in terms of a difference of signification. An affirmative concept will normally refer to those things or entities from which the meaning-element or mental term has been derived. On this theory of meaning and reference, however, if all of the concepts in the composite concept of 'God' were affirmative and positive, the meaning and reference must be determined by that from which the mental terms have been derived and the concept of 'God' must be purely anthropomorphic. The negative terms prevent this by a dual signification; the negative signification is those things or qualities from which the mental term has been derived, but the affirmative signification is everything other than these entities. But if these negative terms are not included, then the meaning and the reference of biblical and

scriptural terms must also be affirmative and positive. If "literalism" is understood as the assertion that the terms and statements in the scriptures "mean exactly what they say" -- that is, have their ordinary (natural) meaning -- then some variety of literalism is the only possible alternative when the Ockhamistic theory of meaning is conjoined with the negative thesis, namely the denial that one can have an immediate acquaintance with the divine in the present state. When, for example, it is said that "God is loving and just", or when the expression, "vengeance is mine, saith the Lord", is examined, it would have to be admitted that these expressions have only their normal meaning. The inclusion of negative concepts prevents any such identification or reduction; the negative concept allows for the presence of the normal meaning through negative signification, while the proper reference is to some being who is other than the just or vengeful persons of ordinary acquaintance. Literalistic interpretations can, of course, occur, but given the structure of the composite concept any such literalism is a violation of the logical properties of the concept of 'God'.

(b) In the fore-going analysis of the composite concept I have added the qualifications, "the inclusion of at least one negative concept in the composite," and "among the elements of the composite concept, those concepts which are negative" This qualification is necessary since it has not been shown that the composite concept may not include affirmative and positive concepts with their ordinary meaning and reference (for ex-

ample, "wise", "refuge", "creator", etc.) Ockham's description requires only that the entire concept cannot be affirmative, and I have argued that when the predicates are taken to be linked together by the logical connective of conjunction, the inclusion of at least one negative concept produces a change in the quality of the whole concept. This change in quality converts the entire composite concept of 'God' to a negative concept, even though some of the elements themselves are affirmative concepts. From this observation it therefore follows that the entire composite concept will have both affirmative and negative signification. The affirmative signification of the composite will be some being who is neither identical with, nor who possesses, the qualities and properties normally signified by the correlative of this composite negative concept; the negative signification will be the natural entities, or objects, or qualities, denoted by the normal affirmative signification of the affirmative concept, and this will be those entities in the natural order from which the constituents of the composite have been derived. When the concept of "infinite" is included, this will mean that the affirmative signification of the negative composite concept of 'God' will be some being who is other than the "world".

(c) When conjoined with the negative thesis, Ockham's analysis of the meaning of the term 'God' which insists on the inclusion of negative concepts can, then, be said to express a syntactic rule for the formation of the composite concept. This rule can be stated in the following way, "among the mental terms

which are taken to form the mental complex associated with the linguistic token 'God', at least one of these must have affirmative and negative signification." This rule, when applied, has the logical force of converting the entire concept into a negative concept, and has the effect of forcing a shift in the reference of the composite, resulting in a clear distinction between "God" and the "world". It is important to note, however, that this is a shift in the reference and not a change in the meaning of the constituents. Nor would it be correct to argue, of course, that believers are compelled to adopt a reference to the non-natural because of the properties of the logical connective of conjunction; awareness of the consequence that the entire concept of 'God' is negative arises from a detailed analysis of the meaning and reference of the constituents. But from such an analysis it is possible for the theologian to discover defensible rules which should be adhered to if discourse about God is to avoid misunderstandings and confusions. This syntactic rule is but one among several; others are required -- although Ockham gives only intimations of what these additional rules might be.

(d) The composite concept of 'God' has a nominal definition, and because this is a nominal rather than a real definition, there is no necessary metaphysical or ontological connection between the "semantic content" of any one concept and the "semantic content" of any other term in the composite concept. If the force of the logical connective of conjunction is set aside for the moment, it

would appear that the composite concept of 'God' is a somewhat arbitrary aggregation of mental terms. But as I have argued, the logical connective does provide for a link between the individual members of the composite. This relation, however, is established in terms of the signification of the concepts and not in terms of the "semantic content" alone. If the predicates "creator", "wise", "merciful", "immortal" and "infinite" do not indicate a set of implicit conceptual relations common to each member in terms of the meaning (or semantic element), the signification (or reference) does provide a set of internal relations between the concepts. The important logical characteristic of the concept of 'God' is not the meanings of the individual components, as such, but the correlative affirmative (and negative) signification of the individual members and the composite as a whole. The affirmative signification of the composite is the precise complement of the entire concept (the negative signification of the composite concept of 'God'). The analysis of the positive and affirmative concepts has, then, its precise correlative analysis in terms of the affirmative signification of the complement-term, and as has been indicated, there is an ordering of the scope of distinct signification as well as the restrictions imposed by the negative terms. The affirmative signification is, therefore, a "mirror image" of the reference of the corresponding positive and affirmative concepts. The theologian's task is, then, to use the affirmative and positive concepts to determine the relations which hold for the comple-

ment-class terms (the affirmative signification of the corresponding negative concept), rather than an examination of the "semantic elements" of the affirmative and positive terms themselves. The nature of constructive theological reflection is therefore changed and shifted to a different key; in the Ockhamistic type of analysis this becomes a question of what can be negatively determined about God through the use of positive and affirmative concepts assigned as components of the composite concept of 'God'.

D: The Affirmative Concepts:

Negative concepts, despite their importance, are but one of the two different types of concepts in the composite concept of 'God'; the other type is the positive and affirmative concepts such as "just", "wise", "good", "merciful", etc. These are said to be connotative concepts, and do not represent absolute terms. When included in the composite concept of 'God' they are said to signify God directly and to connote the creature indirectly, specifically those creatures who are just, wise, good, and so on. There are, however, a number of difficulties which appear in connection with the use of these terms. Evidently, in view of the force of the negative thesis and the negative concepts in the composite, the attribution of "justice" and "wisdom" to God must be subject to a number of qualifications if the composite concept of 'God' is not to be productive of inconsistencies.

Indeed, the inclusion of negative concepts in the composite concept of 'God' and the negative character of the concept as a whole would appear to forbid the predication of these terms of the divine with the same meaning and reference which they normally possess. God is said to be not only infinite but perfect, and any of the attributes which the divine might possess are not only pre-emminently possessed but are also attributes possessed with absolute perfection. If God is just, then he is absolutely just, and similarly for any of the other predicates. It cannot be argued, however, that these terms apply to God by way of extrapolation or extension of the concepts derivable from the natural order. Thus, it cannot be claimed that a concept of absolute perfection can be obtained by extrapolation or extension of the concept of perfection obtained from an experience of the relatively perfect beings in ordinary experience, at least on Ockham's theory of meaning. Both the "material component" (or "semantic content") and the reference (or signification) of affirmative concepts is determined by sensitive or intellectual intuitive cognition, and hence by the possibilities of experience. Any extension or extrapolation must therefore be either the formation of a new concept, or an addition to a concept already present, or the production of a concept with a logical difference in terms of reference or signification. The first is not a possibility at all since either there is no concept present or if one of these concepts predicable of the divine is present then any future intuitive cognition can only provide

additions to these concepts. But additions to any concept is determined by experience and not by the intellectual functions as such, which cannot provide an addition to the "material component", and therefore the second alternative must be dismissed.

Ockham, in fact, adopts the third alternative, but before the affirmative signification of affirmative concepts is examined, it is necessary to investigate some of the claims which have been made for the affirmative and connotative concepts in the composed concept of 'God', particularly the univocity of "being" between God and the creature. It has been argued by some commentators that unless there is a univocity of "being" between God and the entities of the natural order, there can be no possible concepts common to God and the creature, and no possible correspondence between the concepts obtainable from sensitive or intellectual intuitive cognition and the concepts predicated of God.³⁰ If, for example, it cannot be known that God is a being, then it is claimed that the only possible alternative is complete agnosticism about God. The force of this claim seems to be that while there are no simple concepts proper to God, it can be known

30 Cf. E.C. Menges, The Concept of Univocity, pp. 151, 153ff., and P. Boehner, Ockham; Philosophical Writings, introduction. "Thus there is one concept which can be predicated about everything that exists or can exist. The spoken or written word "being" is univocal. In fact, to deny this univocity of the term "being", i.e., to maintain that to the term "being" there does not correspond one and the same concept, predicable about any real thing, would, according to Ockham, entail agnosticism in regard to God.... If the elements of such concepts were not predicable in exactly the same sense of God and creatures there would be no link joining our experience to the unexperienced transcendent God. (Bohner, Op. cit. p. xl.)

in the present state that God is a being, through a concept common to several different types of entities. This, then, is the assertion that Ockham is committed to a variety of natural theology, although this natural theology is, perhaps, extremely rudimentary. It has also been argued that such terms as "wisdom" can be predicated of God, since this is also a connotative concept. Apparently, by abstracting a concept of wisdom from the natural order and then by remotion or by the use of the technical concept of parificatio it is possible to obtain a concept properly predicable of the divine.³¹

If these claims are defensible, then the following consequences will hold: (1) the interpretative principles which I have introduced must be therefore compromised, for on the basis of these claims something can be known about God in the present state and hence the negative thesis must be mistaken. (2) But what is perhaps more important, it will follow that, on the basis of the texts which have been cited, Ockham is himself inconsistent. Ockham has denied that the viator can have any simple concepts proper to God, but if he is committed to the assertion that some concepts are common to God and the creature, and that this is a route to knowledge of the divine, then he must have some way of justifying the claim (a) that there is

31 Cf. E.C. Menges, Concept of Univocity, p. 163ff. Menges attempts to argue that an imperfect and inadequate knowledge of God is still knowledge of God. In the natural concept, therefore, there is an implicit cognition of the supernatural and divine.

For parificatio, vide, Baudry, Op. cit. p. 187; IS: Dist. II, q. 9GG.

a being of whom these terms may be predicated, and (b), if it is true that there is such a being, then this being does in fact possess the predicates "Wise", "Just", etc. If these claims can be warranted, it will then follow that the viator can know a great deal about God; to be more explicit, every connotative term predicated of God and used in a propositional matrix can express known or knowable propositions with at least the warrantability which propositions containing the connotative term "intellect" can be said to be known. (3) Then, further, it is very difficult to see how, on the one hand, Ockham can avoid the accusation that his composite concept of 'God' is purely anthropomorphic, while on the other hand this composite must be inconsistent by virtue of the inclusion of negative predicates. (4) If, however, it is argued that Ockham merely makes an exception for the term "being" while the considerations which apply to the composite concept and its negative constituents will apply to all other predicates, it must be shown what justification he has for making this exception. If no justification is forth-coming, the exception in the case of "being" is ad hoc and there is no reason why similar ad hoc exceptions ought not to be made for the other constituents of the composite concept. Finally, (5), if these claims are correct, it should follow that "faith", in the sense of believing something to be true solely on the basis of ecclesiastical authority and without evidence, is a theoretically superfluous term. Knowledge of God can then be justified by an appeal to the

connotative concepts and the common concept of "being", which is said to provide a "link between God and the creatures", and faith would appear to have only practical value for unreflective believers.³²

I shall argue, however, that these consequences follow from a misinterpretation of Ockham's statement that "being" is univocally predicable of God, and a misunderstanding of his analysis of the signification of the affirmative concept in the composite concept of 'God'. It is certainly true that Ockham explicitly states not only that the general and common concept of "being" is univocally predicable of God and creature, but also that it is possible to form concepts predicable of the divine by way of sensitive or intellective intuitive cognition, and hence by abstraction from the creature.³³ It is also true that the relevant texts seem to claim that God is known in

32 It will be argued in the next section that Ockham's so-called "fideism" is neither destructive, irrational, nor sceptical, and certainly not as scandalous as some commentators seem to think.

33 IS: Dist. II, q. 9P: ... omne cognoscibile a nobis aut cognoscitur in se aut in conceptu simplici sibi proprio aut conceptu composito proprio aut in conceptu communi sibi et aliis; sed Deus aliquo modo cognoscitur a nobis, et non primis duobus modis, sicut declaratum est, ergo tertio modo vel quarto modo. Et si tertio, oportet quod cognoscatur quarto modo, quia conceptus compositus proprius, ex quo non potest componi ex conceptibus simplicibus propriis, oportet quod componatur ex simplicibus et communibus.

IIIS: q. 9S: Eodem modo tenet alia ratio de remotione imperfectionis a sapientia creaturae et attribuendo sibi quod est perfectionis. Hoc non est nisi abstrahere conceptum a sapientia creata conceptum sapientiae, quae nullam rem creatam vel incretam dicit, quia quaelibet res creata dicit imperfectionem. ... Nisi enim posset talis abstrahi a creatura, modo non plus per sapientiam creaturae deveniretur in cognitionem sapientiae divinae...

some way (sed Deus aliquo modo cognoscitur a nobis). But it is an incorrect interpretation of Ockham to suppose that he is claiming knowledge for the viator in the strict sense of "to know"; that is, in the sense that true and verified propositions can be asserted of the divine. Furthermore, the affirmative and univocal predication of "being" is quite innocuous, and there is no reason to suppose that the composite concept of 'God' is productive of inconsistencies. Indeed, if it is insisted that there must be some "link between the entities of the natural order and the unexperienced God" and that the univocal concept of "being" provides this link, then on the basis of the interpretation which I shall propose it will be evident that this is an extremely tenuous bond between the viator and the divine.

It will be most convenient to deal directly with one specific affirmative concept, namely that of "wisdom". The analysis of meaning and signification for this concept and the signification which it has in the expression "God is wise" will apply, mutatis mutandis, to any other affirmative member of the composite concept of 'God', including the term "being" -- although in the case of this term there are additional restrictions and qualifications which must be added.

When Ockham claims that there are some concepts which can be both derived from the creature and predicated of God, he makes use of the more or less traditional theory of remotion. But "remotion" means something different from what it meant for the Pseudo-Dionysius or St. Thomas -- at least so far as the analysis

of the affirmative concept of "wisdom" is concerned. Ockham's theory of negative signification and the negative concept is, however, very similar to the "negative" way, since the negative concept denies, in its affirmative signification, that that which is expressed by its negative signification can be attributed to God.³⁴ Ockham's theory of affirmative signification of the negative concept does not involve the assertion, however, that the divine exceeds that which is negatively signified, and does not merely lack the negative signification.³⁵ "Remotion" is used specifically in connection with the affirmative concepts and bears a superficial similarity with the "affirmative way" of St. Thomas. The similarity, however, is for the most part superficial: it is Ockham's theory that from an intuitive cognition of natural beings one can abstract a concept which does not necessarily mention, or refer to, the natural created things from which the concept has been derived (non plus respicit creaturam quam non creaturam; conceptum ... quae nullam rem creatam vel increatam dicit). If the reference were only to created beings, this reference would involve the notion of "imperfection". Hence, it is said that from imperfect creatures one can derive a concept of "wisdom" which can indifferently signify both created and uncreated beings. In this way, the linguistic token 'God' can obtain the mental term "wise" and this term can be attributed to God by way of predication, such

34 Cf. Summa Theologica, Ia, 13, 2.

35 Summa Theologica, Ia, 12, 12.

that one can state, "God is wise" or "God is perfect wisdom."³⁶

God is said to be perfect, however, and every attribute which the divine may be said to possess must be the perfect instance of its type. It is therefore important to determine more precisely the significance of the claim that it is possible to remove the "imperfections" of the creature and obtain a concept which can be predicated of the divine. "Perfect" has but one precise and proper sense; it can mean a "perfect attribute" or (synonymously) an "absolute perfection".³⁷ Perfection, in this sense can only apply to, and be a property of, God, and as Ockham notes, such perfection is incompatible with all created beings. Other perfections appropriate to the created, natural, beings must be denominated "relative perfections", and since only God is perfect these must be equivalent to imperfections. The proper sense of this perfectio simpliciter is given a negative definition and means "that which includes no imperfections, either essentially or accidentally." "Perfection", then, signi-

36 IIIS: q. 9S: Et ideo abstrahere imperfectionem a sapientia creaturae non est nisi abstrahere conceptum sapientiae a creatura imperfecta, qui non plus respicit creaturam quam non creaturam, et tunc illud quod resultat attribuendum est Deo per praedicationem. Et illud dicitur perfectionis, quatenus potest praedicari de Deo et supponere pro eo. Nisi enim posset talis abstrahi a creatura, modo non plus per sapientiam creaturae deveniretur in cognitionem sapientiae divinae, puta quod Deus sit sapientia, quam per cognitionem lapidis devenitur ad cognitionem quod Deus sit lapis, quia sicut sapientia creaturae continetur virtualiter in Deo, ita et lapis.

37 IS: Dist. II, q. 3P: Ad ultimum dico, quod perfectio simpliciter dupliciter accipitur. Uno modo proprie pro aliqua re perfecta nullam includente imperfectionem essentialiter nec necessario aliquam imperfectionem annexam habente. Et isto modo nulla est perfectio simpliciter nisi essentia divina. Nec

fies one being, but it will follow that the term, as such, has no associated mental concept (or semantic content); any natural concept of "perfection" must be ultimately derived from created beings and points to a set of relations holding among the concepts obtained from these beings. Since all natural beings can be said to participate in imperfection to some degree or another, no concept derived from these natural entities can possibly be a concept of "perfection" in the defined sense; "perfection" must, therefore, be understood as a negative concept -- although its grammatical form is that of an affirmative concept. As a negative constituent of the composite concept of 'God', its affirmative signification is God, while its negative signification will be the imperfections (or relative perfections) of the creatures in the natural order. When it is asserted, therefore, that God is perfect wisdom this must be interpreted in the following terms: from the created order it is possible to abstract a concept of wisdom, that is, a mental term corresponding to the linguistic token 'wise'; this mental concept becomes the "material component" for the act of signifying (or the act of understanding in its capacity for functioning as a sign). The affirmative signification of the term is then extended in such a way that the reference is not only to created beings but to the uncreated beings as well, but the force of the predicate "perfect" is such that the wisdom which God has cannot be of the same type

sic perfectio simpliciter potest competere alicui creaturae, quia talis perfectio simpliciter vocata est omni creaturae repugnans.

as that which the creatures possess, and neither the "material component" of the concept of "wise" nor the ordinary signification of the term can be said to either describe the wisdom of God or denote a wise being in the ordinary fashion. This does not mean, however, that the expression "God is perfectly wise" is meaningless, but it does indicate that the meaning of this and other theistic expressions which contain affirmative concepts cannot be the ordinary meaning which the predicates may possess.³⁸

38 Perfectio simpliciter also has an improper sense: Aliter accipitur perfectio simpliciter large et improprie pro omni conceptu ad quem consequentia formali non sequitur illud esse imperfectum de quo verificatur, sicut non sequitur formaliter: a est sapiens, ergo a est imperfectum. Et tales perfectiones simpliciter sunt multae et sunt attributa divina, et possunt competere creaturae.

The improper sense of "simple perfection" has considerable importance for theistic arguments and applies to the concepts used in such arguments. It depends upon the distinction between formal and material consequence (that is, entailment relations). Any concept can be said to be perfect when it is not formally implied that the thing is, in actual fact, imperfect. An invalid example of a formal consequence is, "A is wise, therefore A is imperfect," although this might be a valid material consequence. When a consequence is formal it is said to hold by virtue of some extrinsic means, namely the form of the proposition and rules for the valid derivation of conclusions (SL: III, iii, cap. 1). If, however, the conclusion is derivable in terms of material consequence, then it holds by virtue of the meanings of the terms (as well as the rules of inference), and includes the possible truth-functions of the propositions. Hence, if the variable A in the example takes the value of 'God' there can be no material consequence since the being denoted is not an object of immediate experience. But if this term is interpreted in terms of extended signification and in abstraction from the "material component" of the terms allows the possibility of a formal consequence since it is possible for them to denote some being who is perfect and wise, but who cannot be experienced in the present state. If "imperfection" were defined in the improper sense and in terms of material consequence, the proposition "God is perfectly wise" would be an undecidable proposition.

Ockham therefore offers a theory of the positive theistic predicates which proposes to account for the reference which these terms ordinarily have. But the referential property of positive theistic terms indicates a third type of signification. A positive concept may have its normal affirmative signification, namely those entities from which the concept has been derived. The corresponding negative concept has a dual signification; its affirmative signification is every entity which is not denoted by the correlative positive term, while the negative signification is precisely those entities denoted by the corresponding positive term. But the affirmative and positive concepts which refer to God not only have their normal signification (unless this is qualified by the addition of negative terms such as "infinite", "perfect", etc.), but these terms are said to have an extended reference to entities which cannot possibly be items in normal experience, and which, therefore, could not possibly be entities from which the viator might derive a concept. If the extended signification can be justified, Ockham has a theory of theistic significance which permits the claim that both the affirmative and negative terms in the composite concept have reference and meaning.

Similar consideration apply to the term "being", but there are a number of important differences. The term is said to be univocally predicated of God and creatures and is common, in fact, to all created or uncreated beings. But this "being" which is common to all entities is not common, however, in the sense

that there is some one ontic reality which pervades all existing entities. According to Ockham's use of the term, "Being" signifies every positive nature equally, with the sense that if the entity named or denoted is something rather than nothing, it can have the term "being" predicated of it.³⁹ "Being", then, is common only by way of predication and signification. But the basically and essentially real beings are singulars, whether these are beings existing in the extra-mental world, or simply "beings of reason".⁴⁰ Ockham is a metaphysical pluralist and holds the view that the universe is ultimately a set of atomic singulars. Consequently, the signification of the term "being" must be an indifferent reference to this collection of singulars.⁴¹

From an apprehension of a sensible singular it is possible to abstract a concept of "being". This concept is said to refer

39 IIIS, q. 8: Et sic intelligit Philosophus [de ente] iv, Metaphysicae; et ita forte in lingua Graeca, in qua loquebatur Philosophus; sed sic non loquimur de ente in proposito, sed de ente, quod omnem naturam positivam substantialem et accidentalem significat aequè primo et non prius substantiam quam accidens.

40 Q: V, 21; SL: I, 38, 40.

41 It is most unlikely that Ockham would have considered this theory to be a speculative or alternative metaphysical theory, but rather the only correct and defensible alternative. But at any rate, the stronger claim will entail the weaker hypothetical assertion, namely that reality may be constituted from atomic metaphysical elements. In view of the analysis of signification which allows an intended reference with the pre-supposed positing of the entities to which reference is made, and the atomistic theory of meaning, it is more proper to classify Ockham's metaphysical theories as a prototype of logical atomism. In this case, the entities which constitute the universe are logical atoms and the propositional form in which mental terms occur may be said to have a noetic similarity to the real entities expressed by the logical form of the proposition. A very close twentieth century analogue is, of course, the Tractatus of L. Wittgenstein.

indifferently to accidents, substances, creatures or to God.⁴² The concept of "being" so derived from the sensible particular does not have any priority, however; rather in the apprehension of a sensible particular the concept of "being" merely represents the apprehension that the particular "x" is something rather than nothing at all. To affirm, then, that x is a being is the minimum possible assertion which can be made about the thing. Similarly, for those entities which are not now, but which could be, item for sensitive or intellective intuitive cognition, the attribution of "being" to these entities means only the tautologous, "if the x is an entity, then it is something rather than nothing." Hence, if it is correct to claim that there is a beatific state in which there is an immediate apprehension of the divine essence, this apprehension will be of something which "exists" rather than nothing. From the perspective of the viator, however, the assertion that God is a being means that God is a possible item of immediate experience (that is, logically possible and not an epistemic possibility defined in terms of the limits of temporal existence), while the claim that God is beyond being can only mean, on Ockham's analysis of the term, that the divine cannot be either a possible object of thought or a content or object of immediate experience.

42 IIIS, q.8: Eodem modo ex aliquo accidente, quod vidi, abstraho conceptum entis, qui non plus respicit illud accidens quam substantiam, nec plus creaturam quam Deum. Et ideo in illo conceptu non est aliqua prioritas, quamvis una res in se sit prior altera; sicut nec in conceptu hominis est Plato prior Sorte, licet Sortes in re sit prior.

"Being", then, is univocally predicable of God and creatures, but a qualification must be added. The univocity of being must be univocity in the third sense of this term, namely a univocal predication of the term of entities which have no likeness or similarity whatsoever.⁴³ There is no similarity between God and the created beings; God is a completely different logical type.⁴⁴ Because of this consideration, it therefore follows that under no circumstances can it be claimed that something is known in the common concept of "being", or for that matter any of the other positive concepts, predicated of the divine -- even though the viator can obtain a mental component for the linguistic tokens from entities in the natural order. If, therefore, "being" is said to provide a cognitive link between the creature and the divine, this is at best an extremely weak link, and in terms of the minimal claims which this attribution may be said to make, it is no link at all.⁴⁵

The negative constituents of the composite concept of 'God' have dual signification, while the positive terms have an extended

43 Ibid: Tertio modo accipitur univocum pro conceptu communi multis non habentibus aliquam similitudinem, nec quantum ad substantialia nec quantum ad accidentalia. Isto modo quilibet conceptus conveniens Deo et creaturae est eis univocus, quia in Deo et creatura nihil penitus nec intrinsecum nec extrinsecum est eiusdem rationis. (As I have indicated above (note 20, p. 137), predication of being in the third sense has very nearly the formal analogue of the propositional variable in contemporary logical symbolism.)

44 Idem. Also: Unde non obstante quod tanta sit distinctio inter sapientiam creaturae et sapientiam Dei sicut inter Deum et lapidem nec sunt plus eiusdem rationis ex parte una quam alia, tamen a sapientia creaturae potest abstrahi conceptus communis, a lapide non.

45 If, however, the point of the claim is that unless God

reference beyond those things normally signified. Ockham is therefore able to make good on the assertion that there is some incomplex cognition (or apprehension) of the divine in the present state, although this incomplex cognition is not of a being, as such, but of terms or meanings, and the use of these to signify a transcendent, non-empirical, being.⁴⁶ With respect to the positive predicates, and in terms of the analysis of meaning and reference presented in the preceding sections, it is possible for Ockham to account for this extending of the reference. Signification is, in large measure, a function of the act of understanding. Hence, not only does Ockham's adoption of the revised theory of signification make possible the

is a being then the divine can be neither an object of thought at all or a possibility for future experience, then this point must be admitted. But this relates to the possibility of thought in the present state, or the possibility of apprehension in some other state, and not to the possibility of knowledge by the viator.

46 IIIS: q. 9R: ... Omnes concedunt quod aliquam notitiam incomplexam habemus de Deo pro statu isto, et etiam de substantia creata materiali et immateriali. Tunc quaero: Quando intelligo Deum intellectione complexa, aut cognosco eum in se aut in alio? Non in se secundum omnes, quia nec intuitive nec abstractive. Non intuitive, patet. Nec abstractive, quia illa semper praesupponit intuitivam, saltem in illa forma in qua est abstractiva respectu eiusdem rei, sicut alibi patet, igitur etc. Unde Deus in se non plus cognoscitur a me abstractive pro statu isto quam Papa quem numquam vidi, sed tantum eum cognosco in conceptu hominis. Deus igitur in se non intelligitur a me pro statu isto nec aliqua substantia. Si in alio, tunc aut in aliquo conceptu communi sibi et aliis, aut in alio reali. Si in aliquo reali, aut illud distinguitur a Deo secundum rationem tantum, aut realiter, quia tunc cum intelligo Deum, aliqua res singularis creata terminat intellectionem meam, et tunc non plus cognosco Deum quam quamcumque aliam rem, de qua nihil cognito, quia cognosco tantum illam rem singularem, quae terminat cognitionem meam. Igitur oportet necessario ponere, quod intelligendo Deum pro statu isto cognoscam eum in conceptu communi sibi et aliis, ita quod illud quod terminat actum intelligendi est aliquid unum sine multitudine, et illud est commune ad multa.

claim that negative terms are meaningful and significant, but also that positive theistic terms can have a referring function. This is not to say that the Ockhamistic analysis has a solution to all of the difficulties which arise in connection with the meaning and significance of theistic discourse; he does have a solution, however, to those difficulties which seem to arise out of the nominalistic program of analysis.⁴⁷

E: The Composed Concept in the Propositional Matrix: Faith.

While it may be correct to assert that Ockham has a solution to the basic problems which arise out of the nominalistic analysis of meaning and significance, the discussion up to this point has been concerned only with terms and concepts. It is an oversimplification, however, to consider concepts as merely those mental entities which "lie about in the mind" and which can be put together or taken apart by the mental acts of composition or division. "Concept" and "proposition" do not represent absolutely distinct entities or operations; both must be present for the occurrence of cognition, and terms and concepts occur in one of the several propositional matrices (categorical, hypothetical, temporal, conditional, etc.) -- although the basic and essential

⁴⁷ I should not want to argue that the "different meaning" which comes to be attached to theistic discourse because of the nature of the constituents of the composite concept can be found explicitly in Ockham. The members of the nominalist movement do not seem to be aware of the changes. The point I should want to argue for, however, is that a new dimension of meaning is implicit in the Ockhamistic type of analysis -- a dimension of meaning which justifies the use of the expression "religious meaning".

propositional form is that of the categorical proposition. Hence, intrinsic to an analysis of the meaning and significance of theistic terms is a discussion of these terms in the context of the categorical propositional matrix. Ockham has a method for making sense out of the expressions "God is wise" or "God is love", so far as meaning and reference or predication is concerned, but the next step is that of determining what can be predicated of the proposition as a whole. Some of the possible predicates which might be utilized are "...is revealed", "...is true", "... is believed", and a number of others. At this point, however, I wish to examine primarily the predications "... is assented to," and "... is inevidentially assented to," or, in general, the use of the theistic propositions in the context of faith and religious discourse. The problem, then, is to determine some of the properties intrinsic to the use of the composite concept of God and the religious use of such expressions as "God is perfect wisdom."

This problem is of considerable importance since it points to what many commentators seem to consider the most objectionable aspect of nominalistic theology, namely the so-called "fideism". But the problem is also important for the reason that throughout the previous discussion reference has been frequently made to faith with no attempt to state or determine the significance of this for Ockham. Any analysis of "faith", however, is complicated by the wide range of meanings which the term may have. "Faith" may refer to that truth or confidence which a believer has with respect to the activity of God in his own life and in

the lives of others. "Faith" has also been closely associated with hope, and in some instances is described as a special kind of knowledge, or a condition for a special kind of knowledge -- namely knowledge of the divine and the essentials of salvation. Establishment of this condition in the phenomenal and existential circumstances or life of the believer might be described as a instance of grace (or perhaps more precisely, the work of the Holy Spirit). In the scholastic context, the latter sense of "faith" refers to a special type of faith, specifically that which is called "infused faith". But during the scholastic period under consideration stress was placed upon faith in the sense of "assent" (assensus) -- and it would appear that for some commentators this is the only meaning which the term has for fourteenth century theology.⁴⁸ "Assent", however, is to a proposition, or to be more specific, to the articles of the traditional creeds. This seems to indicate, it might be argued, another sense of the term "faith", namely that of obedience, whether this is to the "inward testimony of the spirit" or the "authoritative dictates of an ecclesiastical authority".

With respect to these different senses of the term, it is clear that on the Ockhamist program "faith" cannot mean "a special type of knowledge", at least in the strict sense of "to know" which requires the warranted predication of "true" or "false" of the proposition. But if the negative thesis rules out any

⁴⁸ Cf. R. Seeburg, History of Christian Doctrines, Vol. II, p. 195ff.

implication of knowledge, then it would seem that the negative thesis in conjunction with the negative composite concept of 'God' rules out any sense of the term "faith" which has a dependence upon a notion of "hope" or "trust", for the reason that hope is empty when it is not possible to have any idea (semantic content) what it is that that one hopes for, or to trust a being about whom one can know nothing in the present state. Since evidence for the viator must always be some natural event, state-of-affairs, process or entity it will be very difficult to make sense out of the expression "a divine spiritual activity or presence". The only alternative concept then seems to be "faith" in the sense of assent with a very strong over-tone of radical obedience to the revealed words of the scriptures and the decisions of an ecclesiastical authority.

This, however, seems to lead directly to the more or less common (indeed, almost traditional) objection against nominalistic theology. In terms of its analysis, faith cannot be considered in terms of a living relation with God. It is difficult to see how faith (or grace) can be a quality which pervades the whole of individual human life leading to a complete re-orientation of thought and action: faith is a mere assent to the articles of belief. Human reason, however, is evidently powerless to determine anything cognitively significant about God, for it is claimed that the nominalists created a split between faith and reason.⁴⁹ This divorce between the realm of faith and the realm

49 Cf. E. Gilson, History of Christian Philosophy, p. 498.

of reason was much to the detriment of both philosophy and theology. But if reason cannot determine anything of cognitive significance about God -- and since there are no evidential grounds in intuitive cognition for faith -- there are, therefore, neither rational nor experimental grounds for believing the articles of the faith. One may decide to accept the articles, or one may decide not to do so, but there can be no rational or empirical reasons which would incline one in either direction external to a simple desire to believe or choosing to believe because some authority tells one to do so. But it would then clearly seem that one can believe anything whatsoever if it should happen that the authority loses its power to constrain the believer. Indeed, there is now no reason to suppose that self-contradictory propositions can be believed, since it is claimed that reason has no efficacy with respect to faith. Some, and perhaps all, of these objections, then, may be involved in the criticism that nominalistic theology ultimately commits the believer to a form of fideism -- and a crude form at that.

I do not wish to claim that the nominalistic concept of "faith" is wholly without difficulties. It is perhaps true that any concept of "faith" will be subject to difficulties, but there are specific concepts which involve an undue stress on one of the aspects of faith leading to serious consequences for the "existential appropriation" of religious belief. The Ockhamist or nominalist conception is perhaps more readily subject to an undue stress because of the attempt to obtain the greatest possible

conceptual clarity for the term. But beyond this difficulty, the Ockhamist concept of "faith" also suffers from an inadequate theory of habit which does not theoretically allow for any real or ontological connection between the different habits or dispositions.⁵⁰ Despite these difficulties, it must be insisted that a nominalistic account of faith is not subject to all of the criticisms which some commentators seem to believe apply to the theory. To show that these charges must at least be moderated (if not, indeed, dismissed) it will be necessary to state some of the more important things Ockham has to say about faith. From this account it should become clear, (1), that the claim that faith means merely assent must be dismissed, not because it is false, but because the act of assenting applies to all propositions without exception; (2) that the nominalistic analysis of meaning indicates an important sense in which faith does pervade the conscious life of an individual; and, (3), that while there are indeed problems with an appeal to authority and the scriptures, the nominalistic insistence on some authority at least makes clear the point that faith cannot exist at all unless there is a semantic and pro-

50 The problems arise from what would appear to be a careless application of logical and epistemological theories to a domain which requires considerably more sophisticated theories. Specifically, it is the attempt to apply a two-valued extensional logic to the domain of first-person psychological statements (or states-of-affairs). A two-valued logic demands the possibility of clearly demarcated boundary lines, whether these are conventionally determined or not. But it is simply not the case that inner states can be distinguished or demarcated in the way in which Ockham seems to think this can be done. Emotions and dispositions do not seem to have the clear boundaries, whether determined by conventional uses of

positional element -- a point which is often over-looked. Furthermore, as may perhaps be already evident, reason extends throughout the entire domain of faith.⁵¹

It is appropriate to begin with the traditional distinction between acquired and infused faith. The more or less common scholastic treatment of the virtues requires a distinction between the natural and supernatural virtues; the former, or natural virtues, are those which occur as a result of the free choice of the individual and which have natural and physical causation as a partial cause. The three characteristic and perhaps basic supernatural or theological virtues are faith, hope, and love, and their corresponding supernatural habits might be said to be caused directly by divine activity or mediated by second causes. The distinction between acquired and infused faith roughly corresponds to the more comprehensive distinction between the natural and supernatural virtues, except that the theological context involves a reference to the ordained power of God with respect to the significance of "acquired faith". Acquired faith, like

discourse or in some other way, which a two-valued interpretation requires. This does not mean, however, that formalistic methods cannot be applied at all for an analysis of this domain. On the contrary, the fault lies in supposing that a two-valued interpretation of a logistic system is the only possible interpretation.

⁵¹ There are, however, semantic and logical difficulties with the notion of faith; the more important of these is whether it can be claimed that faith-statements make assertions, which in turn presupposes that the articles of faith are in some way descriptive of God or some future state. The viability of the nominalistic treatment depends upon an answer to these questions and a solution will be suggested in the final chapter. The purpose of the present discussion is to remove some of the more common objections against the nominalistic notion of "faith".

the natural virtues, does not necessarily require any mention of divine activity as an immediate co-operating cause in its occurrence. Given the scriptures, sacraments, and functions of the Christian community, acquired faith is something which the individual can attain by the exercise of his natural powers in response to teaching activity of the community. That which can be learned are the truths necessary for salvation as established by the ordained power of God.

Acquired faith is a specific response to a proposition, but the concern here will be for those propositions which have 'God' (or the associated mental concept) for their subject.⁵² That which is known, believed, judged, apprehended, doubted, or to which assent is given is always, properly speaking, the proposition, and acquired faith is no exception. Hence, any analysis of the act of faith demands a distinction between apprehension of the propositional terms or concepts, formation of these into a mental proposition with apprehension of the proposition as a unit, and then assent (or some other mental act with respect to the complexum) to the unit as a whole. The elements distinguished do not necessarily need to occur with precisely this temporal priority; the elements must be distinguished for the purposes of

52 Infused faith is also a specific response to a proposition, but on the Ockhamistic analysis the immediate propositional object of infused faith is a completely different logical type from that of acquired faith. The immediate object of infused faith is the quantified second-order proposition "everything revealed by God is true" and must signify the first order propositions.

conceptual analysis and therefore have a logical priority. According to the Ockhamist terminology there are, then, two types of apprehension; the first type is that required for the apprehension of the incomplexa which will then constitute the propositional terms; the second type is the "cognition of a proposition already formed". The latter type of apprehension differs from the former in that the "atomic" elements apprehended are propositions whereas the "atomic" elements of the former are terms.⁵³ Like the propositional terms, however, whole propositions may be combined into more and more complex units. Hence, in the example which Ockham uses, "God is three-in-one" requires the first type of apprehension, while the proposition "'God is three-in-one' is a true proposition" requires the second type of apprehension.

"Judgment" is similarly distinguished into "judgments proper" where the object of the judgment is a proposition, and "equivalent judgments" (or "judgments of sense") which are said to be, in an imprecise manner of speaking, about those entities signi-

53 IS: Prol., q. 1,0: Inter actus intellectus sunt duo actus quorum unus est apprehensivus et est respectu cuiusque quod potest terminare actum potentiae intellectivae sive sit complexum sive incomplexum, quia non solum apprehendimus incomplexa sed etiam propositiones, demonstrationes, tam necessarias quam possibiles, et etiam universaliter omnia quae respiciuntur a potentia intellectiva.

Q: V, 6: Secunda conclusio est quod assensus utroque modo acceptus differt a secunda apprehensione quae est cognitio complexi iam formati; hoc probo sic. Fidelis et infidelis primo contradicunt sibi de isto articulo: Deus est trinus et unus. Aut ergo iste articulus formatus in mente apprehenditur et cognoscitur ab utroque, aut non. Si sic, actus credendi non est in utroque, ergo actus credendi differt non solum ad isto articulo formato in mente, sed etiam ad eius apprehensione.

fied by first intentional terms. But in the context of faith the important type of judgement is that which has a proposition for its object, or which involves a proposition to which assent may be given.⁵⁴ A judgment about a proposition is the assertion that a certain quality may be predicated of the proposition (such as, for example, that the proposition is true) and is somewhat different from asserting the proposition, or uttering the statement with an assertive force. Judgment is closely related to assent, but the two terms do not coincide in their meaning, since "assent" is a more comprehensive term than "judgment". Ockham distinguishes two types of assent: "assent" may mean the assertion that something is, or is not, the case, or that something has a specific property. "Assent" then very nearly coincides with the first sense of "judgment", since the assent is to the things signified by the terms of the proposition. But there may also be assent to propositions, as such. An example of this type of assent would be assent to the complex proposition "'God is three-in-one' is a true proposition". Nevertheless, as Ockham notes,

54 IS: Prol., q. 1,0: Alius actus potest dici actus iudicativus, quo intellectus non tantum apprehendit obiectum, sed etiam illi assentit vel dissentit; et ille actus tantum est respectu complexi... nulli assentimus per intellectum nisi quod verum existimamus, nec alicui dissentimus nisi quod falsum reputamus. (For the "equivalent judgments" vide, idem, YY).

Ockham occasionally uses the verb asserere rather than the term assentire; there is a difference in the sense of these terms since the former, with the sense of "to claim" or "to lay claim to", has an active connotation, whereas assentire, "to affirm" or "to agree with" has a passive sense (cf. Q: III, 6). But in spite of these differences assentire has the force of "to assert", or indicates an assertive use of the expression in question. Whether the assertive use is justified is, of course, a separate question.

this is not the ordinary religious use of assent.⁵⁵ Assent to a proposition alone involves an occurrence of the actus signatus, whereas the ordinary use of these expression, or their use in the religious context, involves the occurrence of the actus exercitus. When it is asserted that "God is not the Devil" there is no "assent to God" or "assent to the devil" in the way in which there would be if it were asserted that there is a God or that there is a Devil. Assent, in this case, is to the proposition, but the proposition itself must be distinguished into three propositions; "that which is signified by 'God' is a being", "that which is signified by 'Devil' is a being", and "these two beings are not identical". But when Ockham states that there ought to be assent to God and not to the proposition, this is not to be understood as implying the possibility that there can be assent to beings or things -- indicating a concept of "assent" analogous to the second, and improper sense of "judgment".⁵⁶ There can be no assent to the thing, simpliciter, for the reason that there is no proposition. Rather, "assent to God" is a periphrastic expression with the sense of "assent to God through a first-order proposition", which

55 Q: IV, 17: ... duplex est actus assentiendi. Unus quo assentio aliquid esse vel non esse; sicut assentio quod Deus sit trinus et unus, et quod Deus non est Diabolus, et tamen nec assentio Deo nec Diabolo, sed assentio quod Deus non est Diabolus. Unde de virtute sermonis per istum actum nulli assentio, tamen per istum actum apprehendo Deum et Diabolum, quia omnis actus assentiendi est actus apprehendendi et non econverso.

56 Ibid: Ad tertium dico quod nullus assensus est respectu rei quia nihil est dictum quod assentio lapidi vel bovi.

will be analytically equivalent to "assent to a first-order proposition where the subject term has personal supposition, signifying God".

Assent can, therefore, be divided into assent to propositions which are about propositions (second-order propositions) and assent to propositions which are about things (first-order propositions). Proper assent, or the proper religious assent, is to first-order propositions. Hence, while it is correct to say that according to the nominalistic view "faith" means "assent to the articles of the traditional belief" this should not be misunderstood as meaning that faith is a purely verbal matter. Assent to a proposition, or acceptance of the proposition, involves a reference to the perhaps obvious truth that there can be no faith whatsoever unless there is something which can be believed -- unless it is admitted that faith is nothing more than a vague and diffused feeling. If assent is to be possible at all, there must both be something to which assent is given and also something by means of which assent can be given (or which acts as a vehicle for assent).

Ockham's analysis of "assenting to ..." is very nearly equivalent, then, to that which would be called "asserting that ..." in the context of contemporary philosophical terminology. In this context, it is usual to make a distinction between the use of the expression, or linguistic token, and the meaning or significance of the token itself. Making an assertion is something which is done by using a linguistic token, but the assertion itself is not

identical with the meaning of the sentential units. Asserting is a specific use of discourse, but the question whether a specific utterance is an instance of the assertive use by the individual uttering the statement, is distinct from the problem of determining the conditions which would count as warrants or grounds for making the assertion. It is quite possible to use an expression with an assertive force when a more detailed examination will show that the assertive use is unjustified because no empirical conditions can be given or because no such conditions can be stated at all.⁵⁷ Asserting something, or stating something to be the case, requires that the person uttering the statement with an assertive force have some grounds which, so he believes, will warrant the assertion. These grounds do not necessarily need to be sense-data statements or sense-conditions; they may be a memory of past events, the testimony of others, or the justified belief that the authority to which appeal is made is in fact a proper authority -- depending upon the nature of the statement. Similarly, "assent", as Ockham uses this term, has the sense of "to assert" since the conditions given for assent to a proposition are precisely the conditions which would warrant asserting the proposition, while the conditions differ depending upon the nature of the proposition. Indeed, the two types of assent almost exactly coincide with the expres-

⁵⁷ Cf. R. Cartwright, "Propositions", in Analytical Philosophy (Oxford, 1962), ed. by R.J. Butler, p. 81ff.

"Empirical" in this context is given its most comprehensive sense, namely a datum in some consciousness.

sions "to assert that p" and "to assert that p has the property Y".

But whether the expression used is "assent to X" or "it is asserted that p", it is implied that the person uttering the statement is certain that certain predicates can be applied to the proposition (such as, "true", etc.). As Ockham notes, however, this certainty may be of two different types, namely "certainty by adhesion" (to the proposition) and "certainty by way of evidence".⁵⁸ "Certainty with evidence" requires that the proposition adhere to the canons of evidence, namely that it is either immediately self-evident by virtue of the meanings of the terms alone, or evident by demonstration from other propositions, or it has some immediate sensitive or intellectual intuitive cognition which will justify the predication of 'true'. "Certainty with adhesion" means that one is prepared to assert (or, assent to) the proposition when there is no immediate evidence for it, or when it does not have the property of "being evident" in terms of the general canons of evidence. It is said that "certainty by adhesion" exceeds "certainty by evidence"; this may be taken to mean both that the propositions held to be certain by "adhesion" can become evident, and that numerically the number of propositions certain by way of evidence is smaller than those for which the certainty is the inner state of certitude. In part, however, this is merely the

58 IS: Prol., q. 7Q: Ideo dico quod certitudo accipitur pro adhaesione vel pro evidentia. Primo modo excedunt, non secundo modo.

Cf. SL: III, i, cap. 1: Syllogismus topicus ... frequenter facit firmam fidem sine omni dubitatione, quia ita bene aliquando adhaeremus probabilibus sicut evidenter notis.

recognition that in everyday activity one must often act on the testimony of others or depend upon a memory of past events; because the proposition is now inevidential cannot constitute a necessarily valid reason for its dismissal.

Which type of certainty is appropriate will depend, therefore, upon the logical properties of the proposition. Assent may be given, however, to any proposition whether evidential or not, provided that it is not self-contradictory or impossible. But in terms of evidence, Ockham's classification of propositions forms a spectrum; at the one end are those propositions which are immediately evident by virtue of the meanings of the terms alone, while at the other end are those for which no evidence is now available. Hence, the most comprehensive classification of those propositions "to which assent can be given" (or which can be asserted) is, (a) those which are per se nota and necessary, (b) those which are contingent but evident, and (c) those which are "neutral". If the proposition is per se nota then an apprehension of the terms is sufficient to cause assent. If, however, the proposition is not self-evident on the basis of an apprehension of the terms alone but can be demonstrated from other self-evident propositions or first principles, then these conditions will be sufficient for its assertion or assent.⁵⁹ In this sense, some theistic propositions can be assented to when

59^o IIS: q. 25L: Ideo dico quod propositio cui intellectus assentit vel est per se nota et necessaria vel contingens vel neutra; si primo modo, assensus causatur sufficienter ex notitiis incomplexis terminorum et notitia apprehensiva complexa.

the meanings of the terms have been apprehended. If the proposition is contingent, an intuitive cognition of the terms and an apprehension of the proposition as a unit will be sufficient to cause assent. Intuitive cognition, in contrast with an abstractive cognition of the terms, confers evidence upon the proposition and it can be asserted with a grounding in factual evidence.⁶⁰ "Neutral" propositions, however, present certain difficulties for interpretation, since it is not entirely certain that these do not represent propositions with a third value between 'true' and 'false'.⁶¹ The numerous contexts in which this term occurs do not seem to require this interpretation, however. A neutral proposition is defined as that to which the intellect neither assents nor dissents, and is also described as a proposition which is neither essentially nor accidentally true.⁶² Formally, it would then appear that neutral propositions are very nearly equivalent to contingent propositions, but in the sense of "contingent" which involves the double sense of "possible", namely "it is possible that p and it is possible that not-p". This sense of "contingency" retains the meaning which Ockham gives to the term "neutral" since contingent propositions are those

60 *Idem*: Si secundo modo, tunc illa propositio vel est prima contingens, vel sequitur ex prima evidenter; si primo modo tunc ille assensus causatur ex notitia incomplexa intuitiva terminorum et ex apprehensione complexi sufficienter ... si secundo modo tunc assensus respectu secundae contingentis causatur ex notitia incomplexa terminorum suorum et apprehensione illius complexi et assensu respectu primae contingentis.

61 Cf. A.N. Prior, *Formal Logic*, p. 241ff.

62 Q: V, 6; IS: Dist. XVII, q. 8J; IIIS: q. 9B; SL: II, cap. 33.

which are not known to be true or false, and hence are propositions to which the intellect can neither assent nor dissent. Assent can be given to a neutral proposition, however, if one or more of the following conditions hold (and if these conditions hold then the proposition will immediately lose the logical status of "neutral"):

(1) when a prior and more evident proposition can be isolated from which the neutral proposition can be inferred.⁶³ If the prior proposition is probable rather than necessary, then the possibility of error may occur when assent is given to the neutral proposition. A probable proposition is one which appears to be true to many, or the most wise, but since the contradictory of the proposition may appear to be true for others, dissent is an alternative.⁶⁴ When no prior proposition can be discovered, then, (2) the proposition may be factually necessary, but not known to be necessary by the individual. For example, "all hot things cause warmth" may become a factually necessary proposition when there is one intuitive cognition of the proposition "this hot thing produces warmth." If none of these conditions can hold, then, (3), the neutral proposition is said to be contingent; but in this case, if there is

63 Idem: Si sit neutra vel dubia, tunc aut habetur aliqua propositio prior et evidentior ex qua tamquam ex medio potest necessario inferri vel probabiliter vel sophistice vel non.

64 SL: III, i, cap. 1: Et sunt probabilia, quae videntur vel omnibus vel pluribus vel sapientibus, et de his quae videntur vel omnibus vel pluribus vel maxime sapientibus. Et est ista descriptio sic intelligenda, quod probabilia sunt illa, quae cum sint vera et necessaria non tamen per se nota nec ex per se notis syllogizabilia nec etiam per experientiam evidenter nota nec ex talibus sequentia; tamen propter sui veritatem videntur esse vera omnibus vel pluribus etc.

assent to the proposition, it must be on the basis of authority, or because of a desire or will-to-believe.⁶⁵ When assent occurs on the basis of authority a prior assent to the authority is required (that is, acceptance of the authority), while if no authority intervenes, assertion of the specific proposition requires an act of the will.

Since the important and essential articles of the faith are without immediate evidence and are not probable propositions, they will fall into one or both of the latter two categories.⁶⁶ Assent to the articles of faith (or assertion of these statements) will then be instances of inevidential assent; belief that God is the creator must, therefore, be based upon the formal decisions of the church and the scriptures. The act of faith, therefore, occurs with respect to a specific type of proposition; it is the act of believing, or assenting to, a proposition when there is no immediate evidence for it, and when described in terms of the corresponding habits, faith is a tendency or disposition to assent to certain specific inevidential propositions. It therefore follows that, on the one hand, it is extremely misleading to claim that

65 IIS: q. 25L: Et si sit contingens tunc illi assentit intellectus aliquando propter auctoritatem, aliquando propter voluntatem quia vult credere. Si primo modo assensus respectu auctoritatis causat assensus respectu illius propositionis. Si secundo modo, tunc volitio cum notitiis incomplexis et apprehensione complexi causat assensum illum.

66 SL: III, i, cap. 1: Et sic articuli fidei nec sunt principia demonstrationis nec conclusiones, nec sunt probabiles, quia omnibus vel pluribus vel maxime sapientibus apparent falsi, et hoc accipiendo sapientes pro sapientibus mundi, et praecise innitentibus rationi naturali....

It would be a mistake, however, to suppose that only the articles of faith are inevidential in character..

the nominalistic concept of "faith" is basically assensus.⁶⁷ Assent is not distinctive of faith. Similarly, the inner state of certitude cannot be taken as the distinguishing characteristic of faith, since it is possible to have inevidential as well as evidential certainty with respect to contingent proposition about entities or states-of-affairs in the natural order. But then, on the other hand, inevidential assent to the articles of faith need not be considered either irrational or philosophically scandalous. It is clearly necessary to allow, as Ockham in fact does, inevidential assent and inevidential certainty with respect to those entities or objects which are not now present but which have been, or could be, items for intuitive cognition. There are many empirical beliefs which must be described as inevidential on the Ockhamist canons of evidence, and acceptance of these can quite properly be called "empirical faith". Indeed, as Ockham notes, it is not only possible to have an inevidential assent to contingent propositions, but it is also possible for this type of assent to occur with respect to per se nota and necessary propositions. Hence, one may assent to a proposition which is a conclusion in a demonstration when the premises which constitute the demonstration have been forgotten. The only grounds available in this case may be the memory that the conclusion was demonstrated at some time in the past, and that if

67 Cf. R. Seeburg, Op. cit. p. 195ff. It is correct to say that "Faith is knowledge (notitia) and assent (assensus) in regard to the biblical revelation." But it is not correct to assert that "In its essential nature, faith is intellectual assent (assensus)."

premises could be recalled, the conclusion would be evidentially known.⁶⁸

These considerations do, however, point to both the similarities and the differences between an "empirical faith" and a "supernatural faith". The act of faith, as such, is with respect to a being which cannot be an item in ordinary sensuous cognition -- and in this sense belief that there is a divine being is unlike ordinary empirical beliefs. But if it is correct to claim that there is "another state" in which there will be an immediate apprehension of the divine, belief that there is such a being, while without any possible evidence in the present state, will be an evident "belief" in the other state.⁶⁹ Hence, the nominalist need not be embarrassed by the inevidential character of his theistic beliefs if, as is certainly true for Ockham, it

68 IIS: q. 25X: Sed dubium quomodo potest aliquis alicui propositioni assentire sine evidentia, quia actus assentiendi et evidentia in tali actu non distinguitur ut patet intuenti. Respondeo quod assensus non distinguitur ab evidentia in actu quando sunt respectu eiusdem obiecti evidenter cogniti... sed distinguitur sicut superius et inferius, quia sequitur: evidenter assentit, ergo assentit, sed non sequitur econverso, quia aliquis potest firmiter et certitudinaliter assentire alicui complexo sine omni evidentia. Verbi gratia: aliquis scit aliquam conclusionem demonstrare, et per consequens illi conclusioni firmiter et certitudinaliter assentit, ponamus quod obliviscatur illius demonstrationis, et ita quod nesciat eam post demonstrare, iste adhuc ita firmiter assentit huic conclusioni sicut prius, quia certitudinaliter cognoscit quod scivit demonstrare, et scit quod nihil est demonstrabile nisi verum, ergo adhuc firmiter reputat istam conclusionem veram, et sic certitudinaliter illi assentit sine omni evidentia actualiter habita.

69 IS: Prol., q. 1: Similiter sicut potest haberi fides de rebus supernaturalibus, ita potest fides haberi de particularibus prius sensatis et postea absentis et remotis, et tunc rerum et particularium absentium quae prius a sensu videbantur est fides.

is assumed that the beliefs will be evident for the beatus. The religious act of faith is, for the most part, of the same type as instances of empirical faith, and is merely the extension of a volitional capability, both possible and practically necessary in the natural order, to beings and states which are non-natural.

Infused faith, in contrast with acquired faith, presents a different picture. As is true of acquired faith, infused faith has both a propositional object and a corresponding habit. The habit of infused faith, however, is not described as a realization of some natural capacity or potentiality, but is a supernatural disposition and a result of immediate divine activity (or partial result). The term "infused faith" is found in the tradition of theological thought and may be said to represent a strictly theological aspect of faith. It is a quality said to be infused in the soul at baptism, but that any such habit does, in fact, exist cannot be demonstrated either by reason or an appeal to elements of experience.⁷⁰ The only possible evidence which can be adduced in support of the existence of any specific habit is its actual occurrence or operation; for acquired faith the existence of the corresponding habits can be justified by an appeal to a tendency on the part of the individual to assent to the articles of belief. However, since the only manifestation of a habit, in this context, is assent to a proposition, there is no necessity to suppose that given any proposition whatsoever the corresponding habit is not a natural capacity, or some capacity which is definitive of the

70 Q; III, 7.

viator.⁷¹ Conversely, since "habit" is an explanatory concept, it would appear to be equally possible to claim that the habit corresponding to every instance of assent to inevidential propositions is divinely infused -- were it not for the fact that some believe the articles of faith to be true while others consider them to be false.⁷² Indeed, even though Ockham can fit the concept of "infused faith" into his system, it will still be possible to claim that a pagan, or one who has not been baptized, could come to understand the immediate propositional object of infused faith (namely, that everything revealed by God is true) and assent to this proposition on the basis of authority. But this would have to be described as the occurrence of a natural habit, and the postulation of a supernatural habit would be then unnecessary.

Acquired and infused faith can, however, be distinguished

71 IIIS: q. 8D: ... quia nihil debet poni nisi quando habetur experientia vel demonstratio vel auctoritas ad hoc, ita nihil debet negari quando habetur certa experientia ad hoc ponendum, sed ad ponendum fidem acquisitam, spem, et caritatem habet certa experientia, nam paganus nutritus inter christianos ita credit omnes articulos fidei; similiter haereticus circa unum articulum potest vere credere alium, sed neuter istorum habet fidem infusam, patet igitur acquisitam.... Item omnis actus voluntatis quem experimur in nobis videtur naturalis, igitur et habitus.... igitur non obstante quod sit in voluntate habitus propter auctoritatem, adhuc omne ponere habitum naturaliter acquisitam.

72 The problem is treated in connection with the necessity for the agent intellect. It might be argued that the agent intellect is necessary for the following reason: acquired faith cannot be caused from a propositional knowledge of the terms alone since then the object of faith would be evidential; but some believe despite the inevidential character, and therefore the agent intellect is necessary. Ockham's reply is: Ad aliud dico quod ita non concludit intellectum esse activum, quia si sit activus ageret naturaliter, et per consequens non causaret plus actum fidei uno tempore quam alio (IIS: q. 25X).

and Ockham's atomistic theory of habit is of considerable assistance in making the distinction. The habit of acquired faith is said to be numerically one with respect to each article with precisely one habit for each specific article believed. Consequently, one cannot speak of "one acquired faith transmitted by the fathers and the saints", but rather of a plurality of habits. Since acquired faith is numerically one with respect to each article, it is possible for Ockham to explain why a heretic can assent to some of the articles of belief and reject others. Assertion that a proposition is true is incompatible with the assertion of its falsity, but this will not apply when the articles are different propositions.⁷³ In contrast with acquired faith, which at best is a plurality of habits and propositions having no intrinsic connection between them, infused faith is said to be one with respect to all of the articles, and is described as a habit, acting as a partial cause, inclining one to assent to any specific article.⁷⁴ Since the habit of infused faith is

73 Q: III, 7: Circa secundum dico primo quod alia est fides acquisita respectu unius articuli et respectu alterius, ergo non est una fides acquisita numero ... Si dicis quod est una fides numero vel specie respectu illorum articuli, contra: error respectu unius articuli stat cum fide acquisita alterius articuli, et non stat cum fide acquisita eiusdem articuli, nec cum alia eiusdem rationis, ergo iste fides distinguuntur non solum numero sed specie. (IIIS: q. 8K) Sed fides acquisita circa unum articulum stat cum errore circa alium, patet de haeretico; sed acquisita fides et error non stant circa eundem articulum, ergo fides acquisita circa unum articulum et alium sint distincte specie, quia si essent eiusdem species sicut tunc error repugnant uni ita repugnat alteri...

74 IIIS: q. 8X: ... et praeter istos habitus acquisitos necesse est ponere fidem infusam propter auctoritatem sacrae scripturae, et illa una numero existens sicut universalis et equivocata causa inclinat partialiter et immediate ad actus distinctos speciem.

numerically one, it must have a single propositional object, and this is the proposition, "everything which has been revealed by God is true".⁷⁵ It is also described as a universal cause acting in much the same way in which the sun is a universal mediating cause producing heat and growth. But this proposition can also act as a partial cause (at the level of intellective acts) leading to assent to some specific article. Hence, a believer might argue that the proposition "God is three-in-one" is true because this has been revealed by God and everything revealed by God is true.

Ockham's concept of "infused faith" is now a purely formal principle. It is, strictly speaking, a second-order type of statement about the first-order articles of belief. But this interpretation of infused faith would appear, on the one hand, to be the only alternative within the context of the Ockhamistic theory of habit and theory of meaning. If the immediate propositional object of infused faith were some other first-order type statement it would not be possible for it to be one with respect to all of the articles because the plurality of pro-

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, L: Uno modo quod fides infusa habet aliquod complexum pro obiecto immediato, quod potest esse praemissa et principium parziale inferens omnem articulum in speciali, et est istud complexum: omne revelatum a Deo est verum, sicut revelatur esse verum, nam istud potest inferre omnem articulum fidei, potest enim sic argui respectu cuiuslibet articuli omne revelatum a Deo sicut revelatum est esse verum; sed Deum esse trinus et unus, incarnatum, et passum, etc. Unde sicut istud complexum est principium inferens omnem articulum in speciali, ita habitus infusae; cuius hoc complexum est immediatum obiectum inclinatur mediante ad actum elicited circa omnem articulum in speciali vertute huius complexi, et sic est una fides omnium articulorum fidei mediante, sed non immediate.

positions requires a numerically identical plurality of habits. But, on the other hand, it would also seem that Ockham did not consider his analysis of "infused faith" to be the best possible, and might very well have preferred some other interpretation.⁷⁶ If the propositional object of infused faith is a second-order proposition having reference to the acts of acquired faith, then the divinely infused habit can occur with respect to one, and only one, propositional object, and then through the mediation of the propositional object, mediately with respect to any specific article. It would be "more rational", Ockham notes, (and perhaps more in accord with the traditional usage) to suppose that the habit functions immediately with respect to every individual article of belief. Infused faith would then be a partial and immediate cause of assent without the occurrence of a universal principle mediating this assent. Ockham is able to show that the term "infused faith" has significance and does not need to be excised from the system by the application of the principle of parsimony. But when interpreted as a second-order type statement, the doctrine of infused faith becomes both a purely formal principle and somewhat implausible. It is hardly in accord with

76 Ibid, O: Sed non potest esse fides inclinans ad unum actum respectu omnium articulorum immediate, quia omnes articuli non possunt uno actu credi, quia quot sunt articuli tot sunt fides acquisita quarum quaelibet inclinatur tantum ad unum articulum et non circa alium....

(Ibid, X) ... quia autem inclinaret immediate ad assentiendum cuilibet articulo apparet magis rationale si potest salvari quod immediate inclinaret ad assentiendum uni complexo singulari universali et mediante illo inclinaret ad assensum articulorum.

the experientable facts of religious faith to suppose that a transition from one specific article of belief to another is mediated by the apprehension and inferential use of a second-order universal statement. At issue is the problem of making sense out of view that God can be a living reality in the conscious life of the believer, and Ockham's analysis of infused faith is far from satisfactory as an account of this. Despite this defect, however, Ockham can claim that the habit of infused faith does (or can) pervade all acts of acquired faith, even though this relation is mediate rather than immediate. Again, while the important issues are not really considered, Ockham can also claim that reason is an intrinsic and necessary element in faith, not only in the determination of the composite concept itself, but also in the formation of propositions for belief and as a condition for the functioning of the habit of infused faith.

In summary, then, the negative thesis denies that there can be any direct or inferential knowledge of God in the present state. It both sums up and admits many of the philosophical objections which have been proposed against the claim that some theistic statements make cognitive claims verifiable in terms of the epistemic possibilities open to a being in the natural order. But against this sceptical conclusion, the Ockhamist program offers a number of affirmative theses which are an attempt to

provide an account of the evident and experienced facts of religious life and thought. Some of the elements for which an account is required are that, first, believers do seem to have some knowledge of God, even if this is a very general sense of "knowledge"; secondly, that believers both seem to have some understanding of what the term 'God' means and to be specifically referring to some being when they use this term; and thirdly, that faith does not seem to be entirely empty of significance. Within the confines and limitations which the Ockhamistic theory of meaning and logic impose, Ockham is able to provide a solution to these problems and to ward off complete scepticism with respect to theistic propositions. The word 'God' has a referring function and an associated mental concept. Theistic expressions then have a semantic component constituted from natural concepts set aside for a specific purpose, namely for the discourse of, and about, God. The composite concept contains a number of negative predicates and, as I have argued, these can prevent a reduction of the Ockhamist concept of God to an anthropomorphic concept of the deity, and more importantly, prevent a literalistic interpretation of theistic language -- although I should not want to argue that the notion of a composite concept found in Ockham does not have an intrinsic danger of such a reduction of the concept if the logical properties of the concept as a whole are ignored. Then, with the assumption of a dualistic world-view, the act of faith or inevidential assent to the basic articles of belief can be defended as reasonable, even though they are without evidence in

the present state.

In many respects, therefore, it would appear that the Ockhamist methods either provided a solution to several of the important philosophical and theological problems inherited from the previous two centuries, or had the logical and semantic methods for showing that the problems were based on confusions and could, therefore, be dismissed. Development of these logical and semantic theories and their application to theological propositions produced a precision, clarity, and definiteness about the conditions of evidence, reference, and signification beyond anything which had been achieved in the past. But it would be a mistake, however, to suppose that the methods of nominalism are not without their defects. Precision and clarity has the advantage of avoiding ambiguity and confusion, but it is often achieved at the expense of the richness and suggestiveness peripherally connoted by the discourse. Among the liabilities of the methods perhaps the most serious arises out of the content and structure of the composed concept itself. I have suggested that one of the consequences of Ockham's analysis of the concept of 'God' is that when ordinary terms (or natural concepts) become constituents of the composite concept a different meaning is indicated -- although there may be a change in the reference. This has been denominated a "religious meaning", but it also means that theistic discourse must be considered ordinary discourse with a secondary meaning.⁷⁷ From this it will follow

⁷⁷ Cf. George Lindbeck, "Nominalism and the Problem of Meaning," Harvard Theological Review, Vol. LII, p. 43ff.

that discourse of, and about, God is a secondary way of speaking. This secondary way of speaking, however, points to a number of problems arising out of the methods of Ockhamism which the members of the movement do not seem to have solved -- although it would appear that at least some of the members of the movement were aware of difficulties. These problems, which will be elaborated in the next section, are of sufficient importance to render the entire program suspect if they cannot be given a solution. It is therefore necessary to turn to the problem of isolating the basic defects which arise from the application of nominalistic methods to theistic propositions, and then to determine whether the formalistic methods and conclusions of Ockhamism might not be extended to resolve these difficulties.

CHAPTER IV

IN DEFENSE OF THEOLOGICAL NON-NATURALISM

The merits of the Ockhamistic analysis of theistic discourse are perhaps best described in terms of the clarity, rigor, and precision which the logical and semantic theories provide for an analysis of theistic statements. The general strategy is to admit, for the most part, the objections to which theistic statements have, or can be, submitted. If, however, this were the only function of the methods, these would give rise to an analysis distinctly negative in character. The negative conclusions and theses are balanced by a number of valuable positive theses. But while Ockham appears to have a technique for avoiding the reduction of theistic discourse to crude forms of literalism, it does not follow that Ockhamistic methods and principles are not without difficulties. It is not possible, or perhaps even desirable, to attempt a resolution of all the problems, particularly those problems and difficulties which relate to a defense of the fundamental logical and semantic theories of Ockhamism. There are, however, a number of problems intrinsic to the Ockhamistic

analysis of theistic statements of crucial importance for this study. These are, first, whether it can be claimed that the terms in theistic statements are descriptive of the divine in any sense at all. If there is a failure in the descriptive function of the statements then there is a sense in which -- to be described subsequently -- theistic discourse is meaningless, despite the Ockhamistic claim that terms with their ordinary meanings can be used with a reference to the divine. Secondly, if it is not possible to claim that the concepts, terms, and propositions are in some sense descriptive of a divine being, it then becomes questionable whether the Ockhamist theory of extended reference to a divine being through the use of natural concepts can be justified. Thirdly, if the reference to some non-natural and transcendent being cannot be given any clear justification, then the question must arise whether theistic statements can, in any sense, be called assertions, or can be said to have an assertive character. If the answer to this question is negative, then the explicit purpose of this study will be clearly vitiated, that is, to show that the nominalistic analysis provides a preliminary solution to the problem of justifying the assertive character of theistic statements.

It will be assumed, then, that the general pattern of analysis provided by Ockham is, on the whole, philosophically defensible. But in order to provide a clearer and more defin-

itive concept of 'theism' as this occurs in the Ockhamistic pattern of analysis, I shall introduce a neutral term and characterize Ockhamistic theism as "theological non-naturalism" (or "non-naturalistic theism") rather than "supernaturalistic theism". This term is to be understood as indicating the view which claims, negatively, that none of the properties, attributes, or essential characteristics of the divine can be described or stated in terms of the literal sense and significance of any natural concepts; positively, it is an affirmation that the properties, attributes, or essential characteristics of the divine are other than the properties expressible through the use of natural concepts, namely meanings which have a dependence upon the occurrence and experience of natural states-of-affairs.¹ With these distinctions in mind it will then be argued that it is possible to claim a reference to a divine being, and with a purely formal concept of 'analogy', similar to the formal notion of 'isomorphic mapping from one domain into another', it will then be possible to claim an assertive function for some theistic statements.

Ockhamistic theism is usually described as a variety of "supernaturalism". Prima facie this designation would appear to be correct, particularly when the term "supernaturalism" is

1 The positive sense requires a shift from a reference to properties to a reference to classes, with the substitution of class and complement-class for the term 'property' as a more convenient way of stating the significance of the expression "other than". It requires, therefore, a shift from the predicate to the class calculus.

given the sense of "a reference to a divine being superior to the elements or entities constituting the natural order, a being who is beyond and above the world." It is also true that one of Ockham's characterizations of the theological task is given in terms of a discipline which considers being from the perspective of perfection, and at one point he is prepared to accept the traditional notion that God is not wise, but super-wise, as an appropriate and acceptable description (and presumably the same principle would apply to a number of other divine predicates). But the general drift of the Ockhamistic analysis of theistic statements is towards a more rigorous and formalistic conception of 'theism'. Hence, when this theism is interpreted in terms of the composite concept of 'God' there is a reference to a being whose characteristics and properties are other than anything to be found in the natural order. In this case, the assertion that the divine has the property of wisdom includes the distinction that this property is of a distinctly different logical type from that concept of 'wisdom' which may be derivable from an experience and examination of wise beings in the natural order. Hence, application of the term "supernaturalism" to the Ockhamistic concept of 'theism' tends to produce an unnecessary conceptual vagueness and ambiguity -- particularly when this includes the question-begging spatial metaphor of a being "above" or "beyond" the world. The term "theological non-

naturalism" is intended not only to avoid these confusing connotations but also to capture the logical distinctions intrinsic to the notion of a 'composite concept of "God"', while at the same time including those principles which have been described as the positive and negative theses.²

It has been suggested that when the term "theological non-naturalism" is given the above definition use of such a term cannot be given a philosophical justification.³ The arguments given to support this point are not, however, convincing. If the objection rests on the view that theological reflection is a sub-class of philosophical reflection, the premises on which the argument is based can be shown to be untenable. There is clearly a relation of dependence by theological reflection upon philosophical distinctions and methods, but only by ignoring a number of important features of theological reflection can it be argued that the theological

2 It is not intended that the term "theological non-naturalism" is to be understood as a species of the ethical or aesthetic theory sometimes called "objective non-naturalism" -- following G.E. Moore's analysis of 'good' as a name for a unique but non-natural property. The viability of ethical non-naturalism seems to depend, however, upon a notion of intuition by means of which the non-natural properties are apprehended. In contrast with this theory, theological non-naturalism affirms that there may be non-natural properties (not, however, that there must be such of necessity), but the apprehension of these is beyond the capacities of ordinary human cognition.

3 G.B. Matthews, "Theology and Natural Theology", The Journal of Philosophy, Vol. LXI, p. 108ff. The expression "theological non-naturalism" has been taken from Matthews, but the significance which I have given to the term is somewhat more comprehensive and perhaps ultimately quite different.

is reducible to the philosophical. The objection may, however, be understood to mean that the term "theological non-naturalism" cannot be semantically significant, that the reference range of the term is undecidable, and that the term for all practical purposes is vacuous. There are, of course, types of analysis in which this claim might be defended, but these methods cannot be applied in this context without rejecting the entire program of Ockhamistic nominalism. One of the features of the Ockhamistic composite concept of 'God' is the utilization of a distinction between the class and complement-class. It is therefore quite legitimate to assert that if a class name is significant then the complement-class name will also be semantically significant. A different, although related, objection may arise, however, in the argument that one of the subordinate notions circumscribed by the term "theological non-naturalism", namely the beatus, has no "semantic placing"; but as will be argued subsequently it is quite possible to counter this objection by the utilization of the above distinctions and by the use of one of several semantic models. One such model is described in Appendix I.

A: The Composite concept of 'God' and the Descriptive Properties of Theistic Discourse.

The positive concepts attributed to the divine, such as, for example, "wise", "creator", etc., have both a normal

meaning and a normal reference. According to Ockham's analysis of signification the meaning of the terms is that which has been derived from an intuitive cognition of the entities productive of the concept, in conjunction with acts of intellection. One function of the concepts so derived is that of indicating the reference of the term, namely those entities from which the concepts have been derived. Hence, from an intuitive acquaintance with wise beings it is then possible to have a meaning for the term "wise", and the normal reference of the term will be, so to speak, back to those particulars from which the concept has been derived and "forward" to similar future particulars. The concept can therefore be said to be descriptive of those beings apprehended in intuitive cognition, but it is also Ockham's claim that the abstracted concept of 'wisdom' can be used to refer to God, a being, however, who is not a possible entity for immediate intuitive cognition pro statu isto, but a trans-empirical non-natural being. Furthermore, even though there may be a reference to this being, the divine is of a radically different logical type from any created and natural being. But if this is admitted then it will not be possible to claim that any of the concepts derived from the created beings are descriptive of a being who is, by definition, logically different from natural beings. In this case, it would appear that while it may be said, for example, that God is wise, it is impossible to have any understanding of the

nature of divine wisdom.

These considerations reinforce the suspicion that while the composite concept of 'God' may have very considerable logical powers, there are serious difficulties internal to this analysis of theistic belief. The logical properties of the composite concept may indeed force a change in the reference of the ordinary and natural concept used in predications of the divine. These logical powers may, in addition, produce what may be (misleadingly) described as a "secondary set meanings". But this shifting of reference has the result that while the semantic content of the language remains the same, the "sense" of the expressions now used with respect to God has been altered. The ordinary and natural meanings of the expressions can, at best, be called the superficial meanings, since recognition that the referent of the terms is to a transcendent and non-natural being entails the admission that the ordinary concepts are no longer descriptive in their usual sense. The ordinary language and natural concepts have, in a sense, now been "set aside" for a new purpose, namely a language of, and about, God.

It should be noted that a description of theistic expressions in terms of ordinary language and natural concepts with a "secondary sense" or "secondary meaning" does not entail -- at least at this point -- the affirmation that the discourse is in some manner inferior to the same natural

concepts used with their ordinary (and literal) meaning and reference. But this conclusion does become tempting when attention is given to the consequence that the "secondary sense" has no possible descriptive (or indeed any informative) function. Furthermore, since there does not appear to be any possibility of a descriptive function, it then seems to be quite impossible to claim that theistic statements can be assertions, and clearly, it will be impossible to claim any informative content for such expressions.

It might, of course, be argued that while the "secondary sense" makes it impossible for there to be a confusion of theistic expressions with the literally descriptive use of these expressions, the "secondary sense" can be described as a type of metaphorical meaning. In this case, so it might be argued, some information, knowledge, or understanding is nonetheless given though the metaphorical meaning -- even though that which is communicated may be very vague and imprecise. This alternative explanation cannot, however, be adopted within the context of the Ockhamistic analysis for the reason that between the nature of God and the properties of any natural entity there can be no simple, direct, qualitative similarity. The divine and natural beings belong to radically different logical types -- a point which Ockham makes abundantly clear by insisting that predications of the divine must be understood in terms of the third sense of univocity. Ordinarily, when it is claimed that a specific

statement has a metaphorical meaning it is assumed that there is some element of comparison possible, or that there are some specifiable similarities holding between the fields or foci of the metaphor. Hence, while Ockham could allow the use of metaphors (in his terms, an improper type of signification and supposition) to extend the semantic dimension of a language, yet because there is no specifiable relation between the terms of the metaphor, he cannot admit this device as a technique for extending the natural language to describe the divine.

The disastrous conclusion would then seem to follow, namely that theistic statements are meaningless in the crude sense that the statements contain symbols which are equivalent to meaningless marks or sounds. It makes no difference whether one has obtained the natural concept of "wisdom" or not when this term is predicated of the divine, since it is not possible to claim an apprehension of divine wisdom by virtue of an apprehension of the natural concept. Hence, it would then appear that any other natural concept, including any written or spoken symbols, or indeed even meaningless marks, can be substituted for the term "wisdom". It would therefore be true that while the Ockhamistic analysis succeeds in protecting theistic statements from a reduction to a crude literalism (owing to the logical properties of the composite concept of 'God'), it does so only at the expense of converting the discourse into statements which are equipollent with any other expression or expressions.

This objection can be countered, however, and in Ockham's own terms. The solution to the difficulty turns on the distinction between the viator and the beatus. This distinction is not, of course, characteristically or uniquely Ockhamistic, since it is common to much of scholastic theology. But a use of the distinction makes it possible to argue that the objection stated above applies only to the understanding and knowledge open to the viator, and such objections will be persuasive only if it is denied that either the term beatus or a reference to some future non-natural state is meaningful and significant. While it is true that natural concepts or concepts derived from the natural order cannot be descriptive of the divine so far as the viator is concerned, there are possible "concepts" which can be formed by the beatus since this individual has an immediate intuitive cognition of the divine. Indeed, it is often suggested that in this state propositions which are undecidable for the viator are decidable for the beatus or comprehensor; or, stated in somewhat different terms, some theistic statements will, for the viator, be neutral propositions (as Ockham defines this term, namely propositions which are not now known to be true or false), since the individual in the present state cannot know whether they are true or false. For the beatus, however, this is not the case since the conditions for truth or falsity of the theistic propositions will then apply, and they can then be

known to be true or false.⁴

Ockham himself has very little to say about the beatific state. This can be explained by the observation that his theory of meaning does not allow for the possibility of describing this state, although this does not mean that the expression cannot be used in the context of his theological system. But a perhaps more accurate explanation of this deficiency is that the doctrine was common coin in the scholastic circles and was not, apparently, a contentious issue. But since the doctrine is of considerable importance both for Ockhamist theology and for the problem with which the present study is concerned, it is necessary to say something about it.⁵ One of the best discussions

4 Ockham assumes, without argument, the distinction between the viator and the beatus, and it will be assumed in the following that he is correct in making this assumption. Strictly speaking, while such a future non-natural state is a logical possibility, it is impossible, of course, to describe such a state through the use of natural concepts. From a more or less informal approach to theological reflection, this may not constitute a difficulty. If, however, theological analysis and reflection is developed in the direction of a formalized language -- and this is the direction in which Ockhamistic theology would need to be developed -- then the supposed distinction poses a serious problem. In a formalized language, in addition to the syntactic rules of the logistic system which might be appropriate in the Ockhamist context, semantic rules must also be given for the assignment of meanings to the well-formed expressions of the system (in some sense of the term "meaning"). The justification of the rules may be given in a number of different ways, and in the Appendix I have suggested a model which might be used to accomplish this end while providing, indirectly, a "placing" for the term beatus and its correlative state. The model uses a purely formal notion of analogy and operates on the assumption that there are distinct types of sense data.

5 With respect to the doctrine of the beatific vision two reservations must be introduced here. First, the doctrine

of the doctrine is to be found in Aquinas. The context of the discussion is that of the ultimate happiness of man and what this must involve.⁶ To know God, Aquinas argues, is undoubtedly the end of every intellectual soul, but ultimate happiness cannot be merely an act of will. This happiness must include a contemplation of the divine, and only in this contemplation can there be a final satisfaction of will and desire. This happiness requires, however, intellectual satisfaction as well as a satisfaction of will and desire, and therefore must involve knowledge. The knowledge necessary for this ultimate happiness must be superior to that knowledge which is attained by faith alone, in the present state, since a condition of knowledge is not only certainty but certainty based on immediate evidence. It is not possible to claim that this knowledge can be gained by a demonstration from first principles, since there are at least some articles of faith which cannot be demonstrated and which are not, in themselves, self-evident. Faith, however,

is a common feature of scholastic theology and in particular of a number of mystical theologies. But whether the doctrine does, or does not, involve a theory of mysticism is not of importance here. It is reasonably clear that for St. Thomas, and particularly for Ockham, it cannot be described as a type of mysticism which allows for the possibility of intervening stages between the viator and the beatus. Secondly, I shall not be concerned, in the subsequent discussion, with the evidence which might be presented in support of the claim that there is, in fact, a state called the beatific state, nor with the problem of what evidence, if any, might count as justification for the claim that such a state does occur. The concern is, rather, with an examination of the logical properties of the term when this is a component of theistic discourse.

⁶ Summa Contra Gentiles, III, 25 and following.

must have an evidential foundation and this leads to the conclusion that there must be some kind of knowledge which is higher than the knowledge of faith (in the present state) and which is nevertheless different from any natural knowledge. This knowledge will, strictly speaking, be a case of knowing what one believes. In the present life it is not possible to know the essence of God, but this does not mean that such knowledge is an absolute impossibility. But if such a knowledge is to be obtained, a knowledge which is superior to faith in the present state, a condition for the occurrence of this knowledge will be that elements or data on which the knowledge must be based are non-natural in character. That which will convert the propositions of faith (those propositions believed, but not known, to be true) into propositions of knowledge will be the immediate vision of God.⁷ This vision cannot be a possibility for any created substance and in particular any created intellect, since that which is proper to a higher nature cannot be acquired by a lower or inferior nature. Therefore, if there is to be an immediate vision of the divine, God must provide the conditions which will make any such experience a possibility:

... Now it is beyond the limits of any created nature to see God's substance, because it is proper to every created intellectual nature to understand according to the mode of its substance. But the divine substance cannot be thus understood, as we proved above. Therefore no created intellect can

7 Ibid, 50,51.

possibly attain to a vision of the divine substance except by the agency of God, Who surpasses all creatures.⁸

Aquinas then proceeds to argue that the vision of the divine is possible only if the created intellect is "raised by some kind of out-pouring of the divine goodness." It is not possible for this vision to occur as a result of the mere strengthening of the natural human powers and capacities for cognition, for the reason that the vision of the divine is not of the same kind or type as the natural vision (cognitive capacities) of the created intellect. But since an intensification of the natural capacities will not accomplish the desired end, namely the immediate apprehension of the divine, the intellect must be raised to a higher capacity by the addition of a new form or disposition. The basic condition, then, for the immediate vision of God is the reception in the created intellect of a different form or power co-ordinate with the nature of the immediate object.⁹

An immediate and pressing question, however, is whether it is possible to describe the added form or disposition. Aquinas that this is the case and his argument depends upon the doctrine of analogy for its cogency (i.e., the doctrine of analogy by proportionality). The most appropriate concepts for an analogical description of this added capacity will be those which are derived from the natural capacity for vision --

⁸ Ibid, 52.

⁹ Ibid, 53.

since vision is superior to the other senses. The concepts descriptive of the natural capacity for vision will, of course, be meaningful by virtue of a use of the natural capacity and by an acquaintance with a visible object. The basic condition and medium for natural vision is light, and hence it is plausible to suppose that the additional power required for the immediate vision of God will be a medium and a capacity analogous to that of light and the capacity for natural vision:

Now, owing to the fact that we derive our knowledge of intelligible beings from sensible things, we transfer the terms employed in sensible knowledge to our intellectual knowledge; especially those terms that pertain to the sight, which of all the senses is the most spiritual and highest, and therefore most akin to the intellect... and so Aristotle compares the agent intellect to light, because the agent intellect makes things actually intelligible, even as light somehow makes things to be actually visible. Accordingly, the disposition whereby the created intellect is raised to the intellectual vision of the divine substance is rightly called the light of glory; not indeed because it makes the object actually intelligible, as the light of the agent intellect does, but because it makes the intellect able to understand actually.¹⁰

In summary, the following points are reasonably clear from St. Thomas' discussion of the beatific state: (1) man is not able, in the present state, to have an immediate acquaintance with God through the exercise of the natural powers alone, but it does not follow that such an immediate acquaintance is an absolute impossibility. (2) The created intellect, as such, can have an immediate vision of the divine

10 Idem.

if an additional power is given to the intellective soul.

When, and if, this additional capacity is given, the intellect will be raised to a higher type of cognition and in this way the beatific intellect will differ from the agent intellect.

(3) If the disposition is provided and the beatific state occurs, then it will be possible to claim an experience of God and this experience will be different from any natural experience. (4)

The ordinary and natural meaning of the term 'light' provides a model for attributing some sense and meaning to a basic condition for the occurrence of the beatific vision, namely the lumen gloriae, through the utilization of the theory of analogical predication.

Ockham clearly affirms most of these points; he is in full agreement with the view that a vision of the divine is not a possibility open to the viator open to the viator, yet there is no immediately evident reason to suppose that such a vision could not occur. But if such a vision were to occur he clearly affirms that this will be an immediate intuitive cognition of the divine. Because of a lack of any detailed discussion of the matter, it is not clear whether he would insist upon an additional disposition, but it might be supposed that this point could be also admitted. He is in explicit agreement with the third point, however, since the immediate vision of the divine must be of an entirely different type from any natural experience. He cannot, on the contrary, affirm the fourth point, namely that

from concepts descriptive of natural processes and through the use of the doctrine of analogy it is possible to have some conception of the nature of the non-natural state. All forms of analogy are reduced to one or another type of univocity or equivocity, and since it is the third type of univocity which must be used in all predications of the divine, it is not possible to claim any similarities or dissimilarities between the natural and the non-natural states.

In a number of respects, then, the viator is in a situation like that of a congenitally blind person in relation to a person with all of the capacities of vision, particularly in the sense that the blind person cannot have any concepts derived from visual experience. The viator is in possession of a large number of statements purporting to be about God (or about the relation of this being to the affairs of the viator). He does not have the possibility of an immediate acquaintance with the divine in the present state and he cannot, therefore, claim that the language is descriptive of the divine, but he can claim the possibility of a future state in which there will be an immediate experience of the divine with the possibility of full intellectual functions. He may also claim that given the additional experience he may then be in a position to discover the relation between the cognitive significance of those statements appropriated as a viator and the content of the immedi-

ate experience of the divine -- in much the same way in which the congenitally blind person might establish certain correlations if given the power of vision.

But it is also the case that if the viator is to have any theistic statements at all, any language which is even putatively of the divine, or about the divine, it is, so to speak, a factual necessity that this language must be constituted by a selection from the set of possible natural concepts. But it is also the case that, because of the natural origin of these concepts, the dangers of scepticism and literalism are always imminent in the use of a natural language for theistic purposes. Literalism arises when the viator comes to think that the expressions mean what they would mean if used with respect to the natural entities from which the concepts have been derived and is the mistake, therefore, of thinking that the statements are exactly and precisely descriptive of God. Scepticism, also a misunderstanding, may arise if it is concluded that no possible sense can be given to the notion of a future state for the reason that no descriptions can be given of its nature or content (which would have the consequence that some complement-class names would have to be denied any meaning or reference).

In this way it is possible (and indeed necessary) both to allow for the appearance of a "secondary sense" in theistic discourse and to attach considerable value to

this "secondary sense". Theistic language has neither the ordinary significance of the constituent terms nor the ordinary and natural descriptive powers of the language; but this does not mean that theistic discourse can have no importance for the believer; indeed, the circle of discourse within his tradition is the only language which is open to him as a believer. It is valuable in the sense that the individual, if a believer, may claim that the discourse is more or less normative for all discourse about God, and that this discourse has been "set aside" for this specific purpose (taking the scriptures and the creeds as the loci for examples of such discourse) -- not, however, in the sense that it has been "set aside" as a result of implicit agreements among the believers, although there is an element of this present with respect to which predicates out of an indefinitely large range of predicates are to used, but rather that the language has been "set aside" as a result of the logical powers of the language and the concepts.

Although it is not possible to develop the notion in detail here, it is therefore possible to argue that a specific sense of the term "revelation" is implicit in this type of analysis. The discourse associated with the composite concept of 'God' is a type of self-disclosure of the divine through the use of a specific natural vehicle. The Ockhamist concept of 'revelation' is, of course, a propositional theory, and it

is not claimed here that the form in which this occurs is satisfactory. In the back-ground of the Ockhamist notion of 'revelation' is the assumption that a concept will express some properties of the fixed species of the universe, and the further assumption that concepts or meanings so derived are strictly atomic mental entities out of which the molecular propositional entities are formed. It is admitted that there are difficulties with these assumptions, but one point stands out clearly, namely that 'revelation' is a term which applies to propositions and statements and is, therefore, a second-order concept.

B: The Problem of Reference.

According to the Ockhamist analysis of theistic discourse natural concepts may be used to refer to some being entirely different from those entities from which the concept has been derived. The reference of the term 'God' is then to a being who is non-natural, or other than natural. The possibility that an individual can intend such a reference follows from the theory of signification, since a partial cause for the referential property of the term is the act of understanding itself. But this theory does not, by any means, obviously answer all of the questions which need to be asked with respect to reference -- in the case of the term 'God' the believer intends a reference, surely, but it is clearly one thing to intend a reference and quite

another matter to justify the intended reference; that is, to give some grounds for warranting the claim that a reference has in fact been made. There is present in theistic discourse, it is true, what might be called "story-relative" reference, where the context of the discussion provides an answer to the question, "who is the individual named?"¹¹ It is also true that there is a sense, to be described subsequently, in which the context has much to do with the reference, but there is also an important sense in which the believer intends his reference to be something more than "story-relative". Yet, since there are no concepts which are simple and proper to the divine, understood as a non-natural, trans-empirical, being, it would therefore seem that there is no possible method of justifying the referential claim. In this case the objection that the Ockhamistic believer has no idea what it is he is talking about when he uses the term 'God' becomes very plausible.

It is possible, of course, to make the restrictions upon reference so stringent that there could be no possible reference to such a non-natural being at all. One such set of restrictive conditions would be the demand for the inclusion of a spatio-temporal context (in the ordinary sense) and the proviso that only those terms which can be specified in terms of actual or possible experience may be said to have referential

¹¹ Cf., P.F. Strawson, Individuals, (London, 1959), p.18.

properties. But under these restrictions it would then be impossible to claim a reference to the unobservable entities of atomic and sub-atomic physics. It has, of course, been argued that this is not a real difficulty; reference to the unobservable entities is justified because there are observable states of affairs which are intrinsically linked to these theoretical entities. But the difficulty with this proposed revision is that it is extremely difficult to specify a "route of descent" from the theoretical terms to the observable states-of-affairs, that is, to show clearly the "intrinsic" relation between the theoretical concepts and the concepts descriptive of the observable states-of-affairs. Yet while there are a number of difficulties in the proper description of this semantic relation, a number of points are evident: theoretical terms (and the corresponding theoretical entities) are introduced in theoretical hypotheses which, of course, are to have an explanatory function. It is also clear that the theoretical entities are at least taken to have some connection with certain observable state-of-affairs, that is, metre-readings, cloud-chamber photographs, and so on; but it is also clear that the reference of those terms naming theoretical entities is not simply the observable states-of-affairs taken to be confirmation for the theoretical hypotheses, but rather some real "extra-empirical" entities. But again, it might be argued that all that is known or understood about the "extra-empirical"

is a function of the equations and the observable data and there is, therefore, clearly a sense in which the reference is dependent upon the theoretical concepts, principles, and that which is accepted as the observable data. Reference, one might say, is both determined to a considerable extent by the concepts and justified by citing the evidence taken as confirming the theoretical hypotheses; determined by the concepts since in the absence of concepts the best one might say for the "extra-mental" or "extra-empirical" is that it is a 'transcendental x ' (to use the Kantian expression); justified by citing the observable features since it is these out of an indefinitely wide range of experientiable features which are taken as having a "connection" with the theoretical terms. This type of reference will be here called "intra-systemic" reference since it is relative to, and dependent upon, a specific set of concepts, general principles, and experienced (or experienceable) features. This type of reference is a considerably stronger sense of the term "reference" than that of "story-relative" reference.

There is a sense in which reference to God is this type of "intra-systemic" reference, and this sense will be developed in more detail subsequently. The reference to God, in this case, is not merely "story-relative", but rather there is an identification of the divine by citing certain specific events in history and in the lives of individual persons; that is,

a specific (and complex) concept of God is linked up, in a number of different ways, with historical and personal events. It is one of the distinctive features of the religious life, for example, to find a considerable amount of evidence which can be identified in the objective and personal order as evidence for the activity of the divine -- as well as retrodictive confirmation of the divine concern for the individual himself. In very much the same way in which the theoretical terms in science have their reference established by the entire conceptual and empirical context in which they function, theistic discourse may be said to have its reference established by the complex of concepts and the web of experience which might, in very general terms, be described as religious.

But there is clearly another sense of the term "reference" which appears in the Ockhamistic type of analysis. The viator cannot claim to have the conceptual means for justifying a reference to God when this is understood as a demand for identification-predicates or an ostensive definition. This limitation cannot be said to apply to the beatus, however, for the latter, with an immediate acquaintance with the divine, has an immediate intuitive cognition of this being and hence knows to whom the term 'God' refers. This is an entirely different type of reference and will be called "reference by immediate acquaintance". This type of reference would appear to be the only kind which Ockham considered as a possible way

of justifying an intended reference to the divine. If, however, this were the only possible type of reference-warrant, then the viator cannot claim any way of justifying his intended reference when he uses the term 'God', and a further consequence of this would be that in terms of the distinctions and general principles which Ockham uses, the theistic believer will have a term which, while it clearly does have a referential function, will at best be a "story-relative" type of reference. But it is quite possible to avoid this consequence by extending the Ockhamistic analysis of theistic propositions to include the type of reference called "intra-systemic", even though there is no explicit textual evidence to show that Ockham appeals to this type of reference. But as I have argued in the preceding chapter, a consequence of Ockham's discussion of the composite concept of 'God' is that this term now has the features of a theoretical term (for the viator). The preliminary distinctions are therefore present although the Ockhamistic theories of meaning must be revised if there is to be a use of this theoretical term along the lines suggested above.¹²

¹² To speak of God as a theoretical being (a result of considering the term 'God' as a theoretical term) has a paradoxical ring about it and, to the believer, may be religiously offensive. These difficulties are avoided if it is kept in mind that the present discussion presupposes the distinction (following W.V.O. Quine) between the use of a term and the mention of that term -- or more generally, between an object-language and a meta-language. Use of the notion of 'God' as a theoretical term also has a number of similarities with Kant's discussion of God as an ideal of reason.

I have argued that there is a type of reference which is determined by intra-systemic considerations, given that the term 'God' indicates a theoretical concept. But without a number of further qualifications there are a number of serious difficulties with such a theory, and the most serious is that if the analysis of the term 'God' is given only in terms of a theoretical construct there is really no need for any notion of direct reference by immediate-acquaintance. It would appear to be then possible to construct a theistic scheme in which the term 'God' functions as a complex concept (and not merely as a proper name, i.e., as a disguised description), with this concept being linked up with events and experiences of the requisite sort. But in this case it would appear that the doctrine of the beatific vision, or a similar doctrine, can be entirely abandoned. This, however, is not the case; the notion of a beatific state, or some similar notion, is essential if theistic discourse, interpreted in such a way that the term 'God' does function as a theoretical term, is to be distinguished from a variety of science and if an adequate account is to be given of religious faith.

If the only type of reference possible for the term 'God' is that of intra-systemic reference -- namely the conceptual scheme in which the term occurs and the appropriate events -- it is not possible to allow for the type of certainty which constitutes religious belief. To believe that God acts

in history and in the affairs of men (to shift to the material mode of speech, or object-language), if an instance of theistic faith, cannot be called conditional acceptance but an instance of a belief held with absolute certainty. But if the only type of reference is that of intra-systemic reference then the appropriate attitude towards this and other theistic beliefs will be precisely that of conditional and provisional acceptance. Absolute certainty is not only inappropriate but (logically) unattainable. Indeed, with respect to many theoretical terms, those of sub-atomic physics for example, absolute certainty that such entities exist is perhaps a theoretical and conceptual impossibility -- certainly in terms of the ordinary use of the term 'exist', namely in application to phenomenal entities. Absolute certainty with respect to the entities denoted by theoretical terms could only be a possibility if it were the case that immediate acquaintance with the entities themselves was possible. Similarly, the absolute certainty or conviction which is characteristic of faith would only be a conceptual possibility if it were possible to have an immediate acquaintance with the divine -- and it is precisely this kind of certainty which the doctrine of the beatific state, or a similar doctrine can be said to warrant.

Now it cannot be claimed, of course, that the adoption of the belief that there is a divine being and that there is a possible future state of "being with the divine" allows the

believer to claim that his beliefs have, in fact, a higher degree of certainty than is either possible or appropriate with respect to propositions about the natural order. What it does allow him to claim is that some propositions about the divine and the relationship of the divine to the natural order could have a higher degree of certainty and a considerably stronger set of warrants than is a possibility for propositions about natural states-of-affairs. It is this feature, which is minimally a logical possibility, in conjunction with the conceptual impossibility that an immediate acquaintance with the entities denoted by the theoretical terms of science can occur, that clearly differentiates theistic beliefs from scientific beliefs. Faith, in this case, is the assertion that there is a divine being (or reality) and that there will be some such state as an immediate acquaintance with the divine, and this faith will be based perhaps upon a desire which -- to use the scholastic idiom -- moves the will. It will also be true that the faith-assertions will produce a number of distinctive logical features which are perhaps best described by the use of the modal term 'necessary';¹³ but it will still be the case

13 If, for example, two realities are distinguished, namely the world and God, and it is asserted that the world is a contingent reality, there are then only the possible descriptions of the divine as "impossible", "possible", or "necessary". Denial that the divine is contingent ("it is possible that there is divine being and it is possible that there is no such being") has the consequence, by the use of De Morgan's theorem, of requiring the affirmation that God is either a necessary being or an impossible being, and the latter is easily ruled out.

that in the present state the propositions accepted by the believer can only be conditional, hypothetical, and in some sense, open to change. The conditional and hypothetical nature of the beliefs about the existence of the divine and a future state will also reflect back upon the personal life of the believer, since this will still be one of ambiguities and uncertainties. There cannot be verification of his beliefs since such is by the nature of the case impossible in the present state, but there will be a confirmation of these beliefs -- not in the sense that the beliefs are rendered probably true but rather in the sense that the beliefs have a use in that there is the discovery of significance and structure in the life of the individual believer.¹⁴

C: The Problem of Assertions.

Similar and related considerations will apply in determining whether theistic statements can be said to be assertions and to have an assertive force, but there are a number of preliminary distinctions which must be noted first.

¹⁴ The view which is here presented is not, therefore, to be confused with the notion of "eschatological verification" proposed by John Hick. ("Theology and Verification", Theology Today, April, 1960). The situation of the believer in the present state will always be ambiguous in some sense or other; adoption of a specific conceptual scheme of theism may very well mean the removal of some uncertainties -- and therefore the possibility of what Hick calls 'rational doubt', but there are alternative conceptual schemes in which other uncertainties will appear (or be dissolved). Unless carefully qualified, the claim that certain situations point unambiguously to the existence of God

Whether a specific statement may be said to be an assertion depends upon the logical properties of the statement itself. It would be a mistake to suppose that simple empirical statements and those containing or implying theoretical terms can be warranted as assertions in precisely the same way. With respect to statements having a direct dependence upon experience (that is, those statements described as "empirical hypotheses" in contrast with "theoretical hypotheses") there are a number of ways in which such statements, purporting to be assertions, may fail: (1) the statement may be explicitly self-contradictory, assuming that the terms have a normal meaning and reference. Hence, the statement "some finite and mortal beings are immortal," would fail as an assertion on this basis; (2) the statement may have no clear and determinate meaning because of errors in the syntax of the sentence, and the statement "being is larger than non-being" would fall into this category; (3) the statement may imply, or involve, conditions which, while empirically identifiable separately, could not possibly be fulfilled if these are conjunctively required for the verification of the assertion; the statement "there is an individual standing on the North-west corner of X and Y streets," when in fact these streets run exactly parallel is an instance of this type of

and that these situations verify the theistic proposition represents a clear confusion of the distinction between verification and confirmation. It also represents a failure of faith and understanding; in this case the understanding has been tyrannized by reason and logic.

impossibility. The statement cannot be uttered as an assertion for the reason that it is logically impossible to warrant the claim. (4) There may be an implicit rule or implicit condition which forbids or makes impossible the verification of the asserted statement. The claim that the mechanism of a watch is operated by a crew of gnomes who, because of their nature must always disappear whenever anyone attempts to look at them is an example of this type. (5) The person uttering the statement with an assertive force can grant that it is both a logical and factual possibility that some experience can count for the verification of the statement, but cannot, or is not able to, state what the empirical conditions might be. This leads to the stronger case, (6), in which the person utters the statement with an assertive force, insists on the logical possibility that there are empirical conditions which will verify the statement, but also insists that no experience as normally understood can provide the requisite conditions (Flew's challenge).¹⁵

These conditions hold with respect to empirical conditions, and the ways in which empirical assertions may fail is determined by the nature of the empirical conditions. The issue, then, is whether some theistic statements having the characteristics of empirical assertions may be said to fail in their assertive function -- particularly those which refer

¹⁵ Antony Flew, "Theology and Falsification", in New Essays in Philosophical Theology, p. 96ff.

to an immediate apprehension of the being and essence of the divine. With respect to the first possibility, then, it is certainly the case that a number of self-contradictory statements can be derived from the canonic tradition. But this cannot be said to constitute a difficulty for non-naturalistic theism. Occurrence of contradictories would constitute a serious objection if the statement were understood in a descriptively literal manner, but it is precisely this misunderstanding which theological non-naturalism attempts to forestall. The statements about God are descriptive (or can be descriptive) but not in terms of the states-of-affairs indicated by the literal meanings of the statements.¹⁶

The second way in which assertions might fail will not apply to theistic statements. Statements of, and about, God cannot be said to lack a clear and determinate meaning because of a failure of the syntax of the statements. Theistic statements, in fact, have a determinate meaning, whether in terms of syntax or semantics, insofar as they have their natural meaning and significance. What they lack is the requisite experience in terms of which they might be said to be descriptive of the divine. But it will not be correct or legitimate to introduce the verificationist criterion

¹⁶ Acceptance of this point will, however, have a number of important consequences for a formalistic interpretation of theistic statements; specifically, the logistic system adopted to provide the formal structure cannot be a two-valued truth-functional system.

of meaningfulness as an objection at this point. It is not the nature of theistic statements, in the present state, to give indications of the empirical conditions which would verify the claims made in the present state. Indeed, it can be argued that this is apparently a matter of confusing the theoretical status of some such statements with simple empirical hypotheses.

The third objection, however, does have a prima facie plausibility; there do appear to be implicit rules such that an inconsistency is built into the system of discourse. When the analysis of the meaning of theistic statements follows the lines of the Ockhamistic analysis of the composite concept of 'God' with a differentiation between the natural order and that which is the non-natural, the temptation may be to say that the discourse is systematically inconsistent having the general structure of $(P \cdot \neg P)$. This, however, is to overlook the provision that the natural and the non-natural are alternatives and must be considered in terms of disjunction and not in terms of conjunction. With further specifications and with the reservation that the conditions under which there might be an immediate acquaintance with the divine are radically different from any natural conditions, the third possibility for defective assertions will not apply. For similar reasons, the fourth possible way in which theistic statements might fail as assertions will not apply.

The fifth possibility might occur if there were a misunderstanding of the nature of the conditions necessary for the confirmation of those theistic statements referring to the being and essence of God. The misunderstanding would be the belief that there are, nevertheless, natural conditions which would verify the claims -- as well as the logical possibility that such confirmation could occur. But a recognition of the principles of theological non-naturalism should force a recognition of a clear distinction between two different types of conditions, namely those which are "natural" and determined by the present sensory and experience-capacities, and those which require a different capacity. Similarly, the sixth possibility will not apply, and again for the reason that theistic statements need not be interpreted as simple (or complex) empirical hypotheses of the same logical order as other (natural) empirical statements. The request that the theist provide the conditions for falsification or verification of the basic claims -- in the sense of stating the empirical conditions which would decisively lead to the acceptance or rejection of the beliefs in the present state -- can only be interpreted as a misunderstanding of the logical nature of theistic statements.

The six ways, enumerated above, in which assertions may fail apply only to empirical statements or hypotheses. When theistic statements are interpreted as theoretical hypotheses

the logical situation is considerably different. With respect to many theoretical hypotheses explanatory of events in the natural order it is never entirely clear what circumstances would lead to a decisive rejection of the components of the theory; similar considerations apply with respect to the complex of assumptions which together constitute the theoretical characteristics of the composite concept of 'God'. The logical situation may be said to be analogous to the resistance a scientist may have against giving up a well-confirmed theory; that there is some "force" or "attractive power" called gravity is a well-confirmed hypothesis and if on some occasion an object were to act exactly contrary to that which would be expected of it in terms of the theory of gravitational attraction it by no means follows that the theory is false and therefore to be rejected. Even if no explanation were available for the anomalous event there is no need to abandon the theory, although it will be necessary for the theory to be "patched up". Similarly, it can be argued that the occurrence of conflicting and contrary evidence does not require the abandonment of the conceptual network of theism, although an examination of the assumptions of the theory will be required -- and when theistic statements are interpreted in terms of theological non-naturalism this will mean an examination of the complex assumptions of the composite concept of 'God'.¹⁷

17 Cf. supra, p. 16ff.

But there is a sense in which propositions expressing the conceptual structure of a particular theistic complex may be said to be confirmed (although not verified); theists, indeed, will often offer a complex array of evidence in support of their beliefs, and in the context of a theoretical structure this evidence will be admissible. Hence, there is a sense in which a given conceptual structure -- that is, complex of assumptions -- can not only be claimed to be confirmed but also that propositions within this context may also be said to be assertions, with the logical structure of these assertions being determined by their "place" within the conceptual network. That there are such assertions has been implied by the discussion of intra-systemic reference, and such assertions may then be called 'intra-systemic assertions'.

It is important to note, however, that the nature and type of evidence which can be offered as confirmation of specific statements -- and hence of the conceptual structure -- depends upon the complex of assumptions constituting the conceptual scheme itself. Hence, if it is asserted that the interior angles of a triangle are equal to 180° the appropriate method for justifying this claim will be by showing a line of inference from the basic axioms and postulates of the (Euclidean) geometry and by citing the rules of inference. It would be quite irrelevant, except for heuristic purposes, to cite instances of visible triangles. Similarly, the

assertion that a specific atomic particle has some specified property cannot be directly verified or directly falsified; but this deficiency does not necessitate the claim that the statement is not, by any means, an assertion. This assertion appears within the context of a complex physical theory which determines the type and nature of the evidence which is both relevant and admissible as confirmatory evidence. In much the same way the believer's claim that the divine influences human affairs and human destiny is equally an assertion even though it cannot be said to have direct verification or falsification in the present state -- although it is perfectly correct to claim that the statement has confirmatory instances. But as in the previous examples, the evidence which can be admitted as relevant and confirmatory depends on the theoretical assumptions constituting the conceptual scheme, and one of these assumptions may be that of a personal God having concern for the life of the individual believer. To a considerable extent the type of evidence which will then be relevant will be that which relates to the personal qualities of individual lives or the lives of communities.

A further development of this theme would require an analysis and classification of theories, and it would not perhaps be appropriate to attempt such an analysis here. But it is important to note that there are different types of theories and the logical characteristics of assertions, to a very considerable extent if not wholly, will depend upon

the type of theory of which that assertion is a constituent. This observation is necessary to avoid the obvious objection, again, that theology now comes into competition with science, and if reflective religious belief is not a competitor with science it at least has many of the features of scientific theory and analysis -- and hence invites the methodology of science. In reply to this objection it can be argued that one of the striking features of religious belief is the refusal to submit consequences of the religious belief to predictions which would either verify or falsify some of the theoretical components; hence, one of differences between the theoretical components of religious belief and a scientific theory is that religious belief is not to be understood as implying predicatable consequences. This reply, however, is but a partial answer, and before a satisfactory answer to this objection can be developed, it must be admitted that, in fact, instances of theistic statements can be found which do seem to lend support to the criticism. There are certain types of conservative and fundamentalist theology which do seem to stand as competitors to contemporary science. This tendency, however, is the result of confusing the descriptively literal with what must be understood as the appropriate sense of theistic language. But more to the point is an examination of the claim, implicit in the objection, that all theories must have a predictive element. Unless it is stipulated

arbitrarily as a definition of the term 'theory', this is simply not the case. It is one thing to note that there are a number of formal and logical similarities between the conceptual net-works of theism and that of contemporary science, and quite another to claim that these theories are identical in nature and function. It would have to be admitted, of course, that if the composite concept of 'God' has the properties of a physical theory, it would be expected to produce general laws descriptive of sequences of natural events, and theistic beliefs then would be poor substitutes for science. In fact, however, the composite concept of 'God' -- that is, the complex of assumptions which together constitute the theoretical structure -- is derived from the canonic tradition, and even though there is a reference to creation and the natural order, it is not too far from the mark to claim that the dominant themes of the canonic tradition relate to persons, and the possibilities open to individual lives, the obligations placed upon individual and upon communities, and to the historical events surrounding certain persons. Since communities and societies are constituted from individuals who share specific beliefs and attitudes, it is, in effect, a reference to what has happened in the personal lives of those individuals who have adopted the beliefs characteristic of a specific theism. The dominant themes, in other words, relate to certain

qualities which may become constitutive of individual existence -- a reference, indeed, to the subjective and inner states rather than to the objective and natural order. If, then, there is a predictive element -- and it may, on the whole, be more misleading than helpful to use this expression -- it is not that which results from introducing alterations and disjunctions into the possible sensible experience in order to obtain specific predicted consequences, but rather that some general consequences may follow for the subjective states of the individual.

There are, then, two ways in which theistic statements (or at least some of these statements) may be interpreted as assertions. Some of the statements may be said to constitute empirical hypotheses and one such statement would be the claim that there is a divine, non-natural, being. In the present state it is not possible to warrant this claim by an appeal to some immediate experience which unequivocally verifies the statement, although it is possible for there to be a state in which this confirmation could occur. According to Ockham's analysis of theistic statements, all such statements would appear to be of this type, namely empirical hypotheses (except for a group of per se nota statements evident on the basis of an apprehension of the meanings of the terms). But it is possible to consider some theistic statements as theoretical in character and the revision of Ockhamism suggested under the

title of 'theological non-naturalism' is an attempt to do this by loosening the rigid dichotomy between the analytic (per se notae) and the immediately evident propositions by the insertion of the 'theoretical' between these alternatives, and by letting the 'theoretical' stand between the "empirical" hypotheses verified in a future state and a possible interpretation of theistic statements which claim that they have either a "secondary meaning" or no meaning at all. All of these features, the theoretical character, the "empirical" hypotheses verifiable in a future state, and the distinctive character of the meaning of theistic terms, must be included if there is to be an adequate analysis of theistic statements -- in particular, the empirical hypotheses give substance to the theistic hope, while the theoretical element makes it possible to give an account of the manner in which religious beliefs provide a structure for the inner life of the individual, and to account for the way in which religious beliefs can be effective pro statu isto.

To sum up: the dominant set of problems with which this study has been concerned refer to the systematic question whether religious discourse (in particular, theistic discourse) may be said to possess an assertive character -- a systematic

question which has been placed in an historical context. The statement of the problem has been derived from some contemporary discussions of theistic discourse in which the tendency is to claim that the issue is closed: theistic discourse cannot be justifiably said to include assertions or to have a real assertive function. Two way in which the question might be dismissed and closed to any further discussion have been considered in some detail, with Flew representing what might be called 'formalistic empiricism' and Mackinnon representing what has been called the "descriptivist" approach. A number of criticisms were suggested without attempting to develop these in any detail, but rather to indicate that there are alternative approaches to the question, and to indicate that the contemporary dismissal of the problem of theistic assertions has been much too perfunctory. The problem was then placed in an historical context and it has been suggested that at least one classical logician and theologian, William of Ockham, operated within the lines of reflection and analysis similar to those which have generated the contemporary objections to theistic assertions. It was then also suggested that Ockham was quite sensitive to the possible difficulties which formalistic, empiricistic, and rigorously defined semantic theories can produce. In order to illustrate this point some of the essential theses of Ockham's epistemology and metaphysics, along with his logical and semantic theories,

were then elaborated under the title of the "negative theses". The force of this principle is that it is not possible, given the present human capacity for experience and knowledge, to have an experience of God and hence knowledge (in the strict sense of the term) of the divine. But stated in this bald fashion the negative thesis would appear to be thoroughly sceptical in character, encourage pessimism, and to rule out not only all theistic assertions but also any possibility that theistic terms should have any meaning or semantic content -- since meaning is a function of the mind in relation to the data given to consciousness. To meet this objectionable set of developments some of the positive Ockhamist theses concerning the meaning and significance of theistic terms were stated and it was then shown that Ockham has a theory of reference which makes it technically possible for him to claim a referring function for the term Deus. This term, however, rarely, if ever, occurs alone and in abstraction from any predicates, and hence it is necessary to give an account of the predicates traditionally ascribed to God. The collection of predicates was described as the "composite concept of 'God'"; ordinarily, these predicates fall into two classes, namely the positive and the negative predicates and I have argued that the negative predicates are to be interpreted by means of the device of class and complement-class. But with respect to the positive predicates, while Ockham has a theory of the way in

which these may be said to be significant, this theory turns upon the possibility of intended reference and not upon the ordinary semantic content of the positive terms involved -- and for a number of reasons this theory is not entirely satisfactory. It was then shown, for example, that while Ockham can make sense out of the claim that the predicates such as 'wise', 'just', 'good', 'creator', etc., can be used to refer to the divine being, they cannot possibly have their ordinary significance, since this significance is derived from a concourse of the intellect with the natural order. If these terms are, in a sense, "set aside" for use in religious discourse, then the language of theism must be said to have a "secondary meaning" (or perhaps better, a "secondary sense"). But when theistic statements are interpreted in terms of the Ockhamist theory of meaning it would appear to follow that the language of theism is semantically empty, at least of any descriptive content, and -- in a sense-- meaningless, and Ockham does not appear to have any clear way of answering this objection. Then, since religious discourse involves the notion of faith, a short exposition of the Ockhamist conception of faith was provided; but this conception has a number of difficulties which make it less than satisfactory (although it is reasonably clear from the texts that Ockham was aware of the difficulties and would have preferred a different and more viable theory).

The Ockhamist type of analysis then has two facets; on the one side his methods permit a penetrating analysis of the nature of theistic belief, but the other side indicates that the methods create a number of very serious problems for the language of theism and consequently for religious thought. It would appear that the remarkably acute and powerful logical techniques, when applied to theological expressions, succeeds in evacuating the discourse of all significance -- with perhaps the consequence that religious thought ought not to attempt to achieve clarity, since it may do so only at the expense of losing whatever meaning the language may have -- however vague and confused this may be. But the question of whether or not theistic statements may be said to have an assertive force is closely connected with the logical and semantic properties of the statements. It has been the purpose of this study to show, first, that the question of theistic assertions is not closed and that the assertive use of theistic statements is a conceptual possibility, and secondly, that Ockham provides a number of powerful and valuable logical and formalistic techniques for the analysis of such discourse -- in general, that Ockham provides the guide-lines for a satisfactory answer to the problem. But in order to accomplish this end it has been necessary to introduce a number of modifications and revisions. The traditional notion of the beatus and the beatific state

has been introduced and it has been argued that this notion makes it possible to both claim a type of descriptive function and that, while there is a "secondary meaning" for the viator which is different from that which might be the case for the beatus, the language of theism has an important value for the viator. There can be no reduction of the language to its literal sense, while the use of the distinction between the language of the viator and the beatus allows the believer to consider his language to be, in effect, a set of translation statements through the use of natural expressions and meanings. In terms of this distinction, indeed, it is possible for the believer to call the whole of theistic discourse a selection from an infinitely large number of possible expressions, expressions which are most appropriate for a representation of the divine will -- giving a possible sense of the term "revelation". Use of this distinction then makes it possible to argue for both a referring and an assertive function for theistic discourse, but in order to give an account of the manner in which the concepts of the theistic language might be said to function for the believer an additional set of notions has been introduced. To achieve this, two types of reference and two types of assertions have been distinguished, namely the intra-systemic reference and assertion, and the direct or immediate reference and the correlative empirical hypothesis. In this way one of the

more serious defects of the Ockhamistic analysis can be avoided, namely that of accounting for the fact that believers claim to find evidence for their beliefs by citing both natural occurrences and features in the life of individuals.

It has been argued, then, that there are way in which the obvious defects of the Ockhamistic analysis can be avoided. The notion of the composite concept of 'God', the distinction between different types of theories, and the recognition that the type of assertion or assertiveness is largely dependent upon the nature of the theory, then provides guide-lines for an examination of theistic statements and theistic belief. It cannot be claimed, of course, that all of the obscurities can be clarified by these methods, or that all philosophical objections are answered; but given the proposed distinctions theology and theological investigation can profit from formalistic methods, can operate within the context of a modified empiricism, and can claim an assertive character for its statements.

APPENDIX

Both of the terms beatus and viator are theoretical in character; the latter obtains its significance, in large part, by its capacity to describe the human state and as a component in a theory about the nature and scope of human experience. Insofar as this term has this function, it has a definite meaning and significance and consequently a "placing" in a conceptual scheme, even though its placing may be at a fairly high level of generality. It is not so clear, however, that the term beatus can be said to be meaningful or be properly said to have a locus as a concept in a conceptual scheme. It is possible, of course, for the term to have a relatively rich imaginative content, but a stronger sense of the term "meaningful" is needed.

It is possible to show that the term has this stronger sense and can be given a placing in a conceptual scheme by using a model similar to that used by Aquinas. This model is derived from sensible experience, but in contrast with the Thomistic model which utilizes terms taken from one distinct type of sensation, namely vision, a more appropriate model can be developed by making reference to all of the

different sensory capacities. In this context, then, the theory of non-naturalism makes the claim that the situation of the believer is analogous to a congenitally blind person in relation to a person with the normal capacities of vision. Models are not particularly useful, however, unless they are described in such a way that their application is limited, and the following limitations will be required; the assumption will be made that both the congenitally blind and the person with normal vision have both the capacity to distinguish and the linguistic capacity to name simple sensible qualities. The names of these sensible qualities along with a simple and primitive syntax will make it possible to form a simple language (or languages). It will also be assumed that there are specifically distinct and different types of sensations, namely visual, tactual, auditory, etc., including somesthetic sensations. It will then be convenient to divide these different types of sensations into two non-intersecting classes, namely the class of visual sensations along with their names, and the class which will include all of the other sensations. The first of these two classes and the primitive language which can be formed will be given the name 'V' and the components of the remaining class, with its language, will be called 'T'. This division is arbitrary in the sense that any of the distinct types of sensations could be singled out, and there is no reason why vision should be used since the model will work equally well with auditory or tactual

sensations. But given these distinctions, 'V' names what might be called a visual language if attention is given to the linguistic structures, while 'T' names all other expressions having reference to an immediate sensible content. For the sake of simplicity, however, inner states and inner feelings will be excluded from 'T' as well as what have been traditionally called the "common sensibles". It will then be assumed that the congenitally blind person has a full use of 'T' but not of 'V' and will be described as the 'T-user', whereas an individual with normal vision will have a full use of 'V' and 'T' and will be described as a 'V-user'.

It would not be correct to claim that the 'T-user' cannot use 'V' terms. Such persons do, as a matter of fact, use such terms. But it is reasonably clear that a 'T-user' cannot be said to have any 'V' concepts in the important sense of the term 'concept' namely a reference to, and intelligible descriptions of, visible objects. It is possible to argue that the 'T-user' has a concept when he has the use of certain expressions which show syntactic correctness, but this is a trivial sense of the term 'concept'. In the somewhat kantian terminology, the most that could be said for such "concepts" is that they merely provide an empty schema for future experience. Indeed, if the 'T-user' has a good memory and a high degree of intelligence, the use of 'V' expressions may be both syntactically and factually correct. But for

obvious reasons, the possibility of mistakes is imminent.

Given these restrictions and limitations on the model it is then possible to examine a concrete situation in which, for example, the 'T-user' is presented with a familiar material object such as a rock. The significance of the term 'rock' will be dependent upon the scope of the semantically significant 'T' expressions -- and in terms of the model this will include all non-visual expressions and terms. It will, at any rate, make sense to say that the 'T-user' has a concept of 'rock' and that this concept is not as "rich" as that which the 'V-user' might have. But an interesting question, here, is whether the 'V-user' can communicate any additional information about the rock to the 'T-user'. If, for example, the 'V-user' claims that the rock is yellow this claim must be empty of significance for the 'T-user'. Yet if the 'T-user' were to ask for an explanation of this expression, it is not necessary for the 'V-user' to say that no explanation can be given at all. But if an explanation is to be given it will be necessary for the 'V-user' to rely upon semantically significant 'T' expressions. The satisfaction of the demand for an explanation must then involve, so far as this is possible, a translation of the cognitive significance of the expression "this rock is yellow" into 'T'-type statements, and to some extent this can be done. It is not implausible to suppose that the 'T-user'

has a grasp of generic terms and that the notion of a class of sensible qualities is meaningful. If so, the 'V-user' can then say that 'Yellow' names a sensible quality, but the qualification would have to be immediately added that this is not an experience-quality within the circle of experiences defined by 'T'. This qualification is necessary to avoid the possible misunderstanding arising out of an identification of the word 'yellow' with some term meaningful in the context of 'T'. The qualification also has the function of forcing a recognition that the range of experience is greater than that which is expressible by 'T', and consequently that the scope and possibilities for knowledge is greater for the 'V-user' than for the 'T-user'. It is also possible to establish a number of correlations: it might be said that the word 'yellow' names a specifically distinct sensible quality roughly in the middle of a spectrum of colours in much the same manner that the 'T' quality of fine grit sand-paper is roughly in the middle of a 'T' spectrum between the 'T' qualities of velvet or glass and that which might be counted as the roughest of surfaces. It might also be said that yellow is a medium warm (or cool) colour, but not as cool as green nor as warm as red, etc. Just which determinations and correlations are established is to a great extent (but not wholly) a matter of convention. The concept of a 'spectrum' or 'continuum' provides, however, one possible way in which correlations can be established, although

it may be impossible to establish in 'T' what it means to say that red stands at one specific end of the spectrum rather than the other end. The basic condition for making the translation is, then, the use of purely formal concepts and does not depend upon some specific semantic content. These purely formal notions, and 'continuum' is but one among several possibilities, make it possible to establish this analogical translation and, more generally, to construct a certain type of analogical argumentation.

The translation statements for the term 'yellow' into 'T' significant expressions, by the 'V-user', can then be said to be a partial re-statement of the meaning of that term in 'T'. What these translation statements accomplish is a semantic "placing" for what would otherwise be a meaningless mark or sound in the context of 'T'. It is no longer possible for the 'T-user' to claim that the term 'yellow' is a meaningless linguistic token, although it still remains true that the 'T-user' does not have a concept of 'yellow' in the important sense in which it is said that the 'V-user' has a concept of 'yellow'. Consequently, it is not correct to claim that the translation statements provide the 'T-user' with any specific information -- in the sense that the 'T-user' has now a number of statements which he can verify. Indeed, the translation statements may be of very little use, descriptively, to the 'T-user'; this, however, is not the important point, since the

purpose of the translation statement is to provide a "placing" and "locus" for the 'V' term in the context of 'T'. Furthermore, even though the term may have very little use for the 'T-user', and the colour term not only has a "locus" but also some significance, it also has some of the properties characteristic of theoretical terms insofar as this term has no direct sensory accompaniments (in 'T').

It will also follow that, while from the point of view of the 'T-user' it is not correct to claim that there is any information communicated, this is not the case from the perspective of the 'V-user'. The translation statements cannot be said to provide the 'T-user' with descriptions of verifiable states-of-affairs, but the statements will be such descriptions for the 'V-user'. Hence, the statement "this material object has a non-'T' quality roughly in the middle of a colour spectrum" is both an assertion and a verified knowledge-claim for the 'V-user' although not for the 'T-user'. It can, however, be a potential knowledge-claim for the 'T-user' and then may be used with an assertive force. The translation statement is not, of course, as precise or as direct as the statement "this material object is yellow", but then many different verbal forms may be used to make the same assertion. It is also true that, because of the imprecision, mistakes and misunderstandings may easily occur. These, however, can be readily removed in a number of different ways,

even if it should be the case that the 'V-user' does not have a name for the indicated sensible quality. Consequently, it can be claimed that the translation statement is descriptive for the 'V-user', but whether it is descriptive or not depends on the perspective (or more correctly, the sensory capacities) of the individual concerned. And, as will perhaps be obvious, a statement which cannot be defined now as descriptive for some 'T-user' may, if the appropriate sensory conditions should hold, become descriptive at some later date.

The application of this model to theistic statements is straightforward. The viator is the individual whose language and capacities for knowledge is analogous to that of the 'T-user' while the beatus or comprehensor is analogous to the 'V-user'. The viator does not have an immediate acquaintance with the divine and therefore cannot claim that his language is descriptive in the present state, but with the belief that there is a future state he may then claim that the discourse will receive specific cognitive content and become descriptive. Theistic language is therefore analogous to translation statements in 'T' (the natural language) of those statements which are only fully significant in 'V'. It can be claimed that some natural language and natural concepts must be used if there are to be translation formulae at all, that is, a language of and about God; but this will then be a segment of the natural language which has been set apart for this specific purpose.

Just as the attempt to give an explanation of the 'V'-significant expression requires the use of 'T'-significant expressions, theistic discourse must utilize natural concepts if there is to be any discourse or communication about the divine. If the viator is careless in the use of this natural language there will be a tendency to conclude that the statements are descriptively literal. This tendency is easily removed, however, by a recognition of the logical properties of the composite concept of 'God' which makes any such literal identification impossible.

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